A

HISTORY

OF THE

LIFE AND VOYAGES

OF

CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS.

BY

WASHINGTON IRVING.

Venient annis
Sæcula seris, quibus Oceanus
Vincula rerum laxet, et ingens
Pateat tellus, Typhisque novos
Detegat Orbes, nec sit terris
Ultima Thule.

Seneca, Medea.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

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THE

LIFE AND VOYAGES

OF

COLUMBUS.

BOOK XII.

CHAPTER I.

CONFUSION IN THE ISLAND. PROCEEDINGS OF THE REBELS AT XARAGUA.

[August 30, 1498.]

COLUMBUS arrived at St. Domingo, wearied by a long and arduous voyage and worn down by infirmities; both mind and body craved repose, but from the time he first entered into public life, he was doomed never again to taste the sweets of tranquillity. The island of Hispaniola, the favourite scene of his hopes, was destined to involve him in perpetual troubles, to fetter his fortunes, impede his enterprises, and embitter the conclusion of his life. What a scene of poverty and suffering had this opulent and lovely

island been rendered by the bad passions of a few despicable men! The wars with the natives and the seditions among the colonists had put a stop to the labours of the mines, and all hopes of wealth were at an end. The horrors of famine had succeeded to those of war. The cultivation of the earth had been generally neglected; several of the provinces had been desolated during the late troubles; a great part of the Indians had fled to the mountains, and those who remained had lost all heart to labour, seeing that the produce of their toils was liable to be wrested from them by ruthless strangers. It is true, the Vega was once more at peace, but it was a desolate tranquillity. That beautiful region, which but four years before the Spaniards had found so populous and happy, which seemed to inclose in its luxuriant bosom all the sweets of nature, and to exclude all the cares and sorrows of the world, was now a vast scene of wretchedness and repining. Many of those Indian towns, where the Spaniards had been detained by genial hospitality, and almost worshipped as beneficent deities, were now silent and deserted. Some of their late inhabitants were lurking among

rocks and caverns; some were reduced to slavery; many had perished with hunger, and many had fallen by the sword. It seems almost incredible, that so small a number of men, restrained too by well-meaning governors, could in so short a space of time have produced such wide-spreading miseries. But the principles of evil have a fatal activity. With every exertion, the best of men can do but a moderate amount of good; but it seems in the power of the most contemptible individual to do incalculable mischief.

The evil passions of the white men, which had inflicted such calamities upon this innocent people, had ensured likewise a merited return of suffering to themselves. In no part was this more truly exemplified than among the inhabitants of Isabella, the most idle, factious, and dissolute of the island. The public works were unfinished; the gardens and fields they had begun to cultivate lay neglected: they had driven the natives from their vicinity by extortion and cruelty, and had rendered the country around them a solitary wilderness. Too idle to labour, and destitute of any resources with which to occupy their indolence, they

quarrelled among themselves, mutinied against their rulers, and wasted their time in alternate riot and despondency. Many of the soldiery quartered about the island, had suffered from ill health during the late troubles, being shut up in Indian villages where they could take no exercise, and obliged to subsist on food to which they could not accustom themselves. Those who had been actively employed, had been worn down by hard service, long marches, and scanty food. Many of them were broken in constitution, and many had perished by disease. There was a universal desire to leave the island, and to escape from the miseries which they had created. Yet this was the favoured and fruitful land to which the eyes of philosophers and poets in Europe were fondly turned, as realizing the pictures of the golden age. So true it is, that the fairest Elysium that fancy ever devised, would be turned into a purgatory by the passions of bad men.

One of the first measures of Columbus on his arrival, was to issue a proclamation approving of all the measures of the adelantado, and denouncing Roldan and his associates. That turbulent

man had taken possession of Xaragua, where he had been kindly received by the natives. He had permitted his followers to lead an idle and licentious life among its beautiful scenes, making the surrounding country and its inhabitants subservient to their pleasures and their passions. An event happened previous to their knowledge of the arrival of Columbus, which threw supplies into their hands, and strengthened their power. As they were one day loitering on the sea-shore, they beheld three caravels at a distance, the sight of which, in this unfrequented part of the ocean, filled them with wonder and alarm. The ships approached the land, and came to anchor. The rebels apprehended at first that they were vessels despatched in pursuit of them. Roldan, however, who was as sagacious as he was bold, surmised that they were ships which had wandered from their course, and been borne to the westward by the currents, and that they must be ignorant of the recent occurrences of the island. Enjoining the utmost secrecy on his men, he went on board, pretending to be stationed in that neighbourhood for the purpose of keeping the natives

in obedience, and collecting tribute. His conjectures as to the vessels were correct. They were, in fact, the three caravels which had been detached by Columbus from his squadron at the Canary Islands, to bring supplies to the colonies. The captains being ignorant of the strength of the currents, which set through the Caribbean Sea, had been carried west far beyond their reckoning, until they had at length wandered to the coast of Xaragua.

Roldan and his followers kept their secret closely for three days. Being considered a man in important trust and authority, the captains did not hesitate to grant all his requests for supplies. He procured swords, lances, cross bows, and various military stores; while his men, dispersed through the three vessels, were busy among the crews, secretly making partisans, representing the hard life of the colonists at St. Domingo, and the ease and revelry in which they passed their time at Xaragua. Many of the crew had been shipped in compliance with the admiral's ill-judged proposition, to commute criminal punishments into transportation to the colony. They

were vagabonds, the refuse of Spanish towns, and culprits from Spanish dungeons. They were the very men, therefore, to be wrought upon by such representations, and they promised on the first opportunity to desert and join the rebels.

It was not until the third day, that Alonzo Sanchez de Carvajal, the most intelligent of the three captains, discovered the real character of the dangerous guests whom he had admitted so freely on board of his vessels. It was then too late; the mischief was effected. He and his fellow captains had many earnest conversations with Roldan, endeavouring to persuade him from his dangerous opposition to the regular authority. The certainty that Columbus was actually on his way to the island, with additional forces, and augmented authority, had operated strongly on his mind. He had, as has already been intimated, prepared his friends at St. Domingo to plead his cause with the admiral, assuring him that he had only acted in opposition to the injustice and oppression of the adelantado, but was ready to submit to Columbus on his arrival. Carvajal perceived that the resolution of Roldan and of several of

his principal confederates was shaken, and flattered himself, that, if he were to remain some little time among the rebels, he might succeed in drawing them back to their duty. Contrary winds rendered it impossible for the ships to work up against the currents to St. Domingo. It was arranged among the captains, therefore, that a large number of the people on board, artificers and others most important to the service of the colony, should proceed to the settlement by land. They were to be conducted by Juan Antonio Colombo, captain of one of the caravels, a relative of the admiral, and zealously devoted to his interests. Arana was to proceed with the ships, when the wind would permit, and Carvajal volunteered to remain on shore, to endeavour to bring the rebels to their allegiance.

On the following morning, Juan Antonio Colombo landed with forty men well armed with cross bows, swords and lances, but was astonished to find himself suddenly deserted by all his party excepting eight. The deserters went off in triumph to the rebels, who received with exultation this important reinforcement of kindred

spirits. It was in vain that Juan Antonio endeavoured by remonstrances and threats to bring them back to their duty. They were most of them convicted culprits, accustomed to detest order, and to set law at defiance. It was equally in vain that he appealed to Roldan, and reminded him of his professions of loyalty to the government. The latter replied that he had no means of enforcing obedience; his was a mere "Monastery of Observation," where every one was at liberty to adopt the habit of the order. Such was the first of a long train of evils, which sprang from this most ill-judged expedient of peopling a colony with criminals, and thus mingling vice and villany with the fountain head of its population.

Juan Antonio, grieved and disconcerted, returned on board with the few who remained faithful. Fearing further desertions, the two captains immediately put to sea, leaving Carvajal on shore, to prosecute his attempt at reforming the rebels. It was not without great difficulty and delay that the vessels reached St. Domingo; the ship of Carvajal having struck on a sand-bank, and sustained great injury. By the time of their arrival

at their destined port, the greater part of the provisions with which they had been freighted was either exhausted or damaged. Alonzo Sanchez de Carvajal arrived shortly afterwards by land, having been escorted to within six leagues of the place by several of the insurgents, to protect him from the Indians. He had failed in his attempt to persuade the band to immediate submission; but Roldan had promised that the moment he heard of the arrival of Columbus, he would repair to the neighbourhood of St. Domingo, to be at hand to state his grievances, and the reasons of his past conduct, and to enter into a negotiation for the adjustment of all differences. Carvajal brought a letter from him to the admiral to the same purport; and expressed a confident opinion, from all that he observed of the rebels, that they might easily be brought back to their allegiance by an assurance of amnesty*.

* Las Casas, l. 1, c. 149, 150. Herrera, decad. 1, l. iii. c. 12. Hist. del Almirante, c. 77.

CHAPTER II.

NEGOTIATION OF THE ADMIRAL WITH THE REBELS. DEPARTURE OF SHIPS FOR SPAIN.

[1498.]

NOTWITHSTANDING the favourable representations of Carvajal, Columbus was greatly troubled by the late event at Xaragua. He saw that the insolence of the rebels, and their confidence in their strength, must be greatly increased by the accession of such a large number of well-armed and desperate confederates. The proposition of Roldan, to approach to the neighbourhood of St. Domingo, startled him. He doubted the sincerity of his professions, and apprehended great evils and dangers from so artful, daring, and turbulent a leader, with a rash and devoted crew at his command. The example of this lawless horde, roving at large about the island, and living in loose revel and open profligacy, could not but have a dangerous effect upon the colonists newly arrived; and when they were close at hand, to carry on secret intrigues, and to hold out a

camp of refuge to all malcontents, the loyalty of the whole colony might be sapped and undermined.

Some measures were immediately necessary to fortify the fidelity of the people against such seductions. He was aware that there was a vehement desire among many to return to Spain; and that an idea had been industriously propagated by the seditious, that he and his brothers wished to detain the colonists on the island through motives of self-interest. On the 12th of September, therefore, he issued a proclamation, offering free passage and provisions for the voyage to all who wished to return to Spain, in five vessels which were nearly ready to put to sea. He hoped by this means to relieve the colony from the idle and disaffected, to weaken the party of Roldan, and to retain none about him but such as were sound-hearted and well-disposed to the service of the island.

He wrote at the same time to Miguel Ballester, the staunch and well-tried veteran who commanded the fortress of Conception, advising him to be upon his guard, as the rebels were coming

into his neighbourhood. He empowered him also to have an interview with Roldan; to offer him pardon and oblivion of the past, on condition of his immediate return to duty; and to invite him to repair to St. Domingo to have an interview with the admiral, under a solemn, and, if required, a written assurance from the latter, of personal safety. Columbus was sincere in his intentions. He was of a benevolent and placable disposition, and singularly free from all vindictive feeling towards the many worthless and wicked men who heaped sorrow on his head.

Ballester had scarcely received this letter, when the rebels began to arrive at the village of Bonao. This was situated in a delicious valley, or Vega, bearing the same name; the country was well peopled and abundant. It was about ten leagues from Fort Conception, and about twenty from St. Domingo. Here Pedro Requelme, one of the ringleaders of the sedition, had large possessions, and his residence became the head-quarters of the rebels. Adrian de Moxica, a man of turbulent and mischievous character, brought his detachment of dissolute ruffians to this place of rendezvous.

Roldan and others of the conspirators drew together there by different routes.

No sooner did the veteran Miguel Ballester hear of the arrival of Roldan, than he set forth to meet him. Ballester was an old and venerable man, gray-headed, and of a soldier-like demeanour. He was loyal, frank, and virtuous; of a serious disposition, and great simplicity of heart*. He was well chosen as a mediator with rash and profligate men, being calculated to calm their passions by his sobriety, to disarm their petulance by his age, to win their confidence by his artless probity, and to awe their licentiousness by his spotless virtue.

Ballester found Roldan in company with Pedro Riquelme, Pedro de Gamiz, and Adrian de Moxica, three of his principal confederates. Flushed with a confidence of his present strength, Roldan treated the proffered pardon with contempt, declaring that he did not come there to treat of peace, but to demand the release of certain Indians who had been captured unjustifiably, and were about to be shipped to Spain as slaves,

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind., lib. i., c. 153.

notwithstanding that he, in his capacity of Alcalde mayor, had pledged his word for their protection. He declared that until these Indians were given up, he would listen to no terms of compact; throwing out an insolent intimation at the same time, that he held the admiral and his fortunes in his hand, to make and mar them as he pleased.

The Indians here alluded to, were certain subjects of Guarionex, who had been incited by Roldan to resist the exaction of tribute, and who, under the sanction of his supposed authority, had engaged in the insurrections of the Vega. Roldan knew that the enslavement of the Indians was an unpopular feature in the government of the island, especially with the queen; and the artful character of this man is evinced in his giving his opposition to Columbus the appearance of a vindication of the rights of the suffering islanders. Other demands were made of a highly insolent nature, and the rebels declared that in all further negotiations, they would treat with no other intermediate agent than Carvajal, having had proofs of his fairness and impartiality in the course of their late communications with him at Xaragua.

This arrogant reply to his proffer of pardon was totally different from what the admiral had been led to expect. He was placed in the most embarrassing situation. He seemed surrounded by treachery and falsehood. He knew that Roldan had friends and secret partisans even among those who professed to remain faithful; and he knew not how far the ramifications of the conspiracy might extend. A circumstance soon occurred to shew the justice of his apprehensions. He ordered the men of St. Domingo to appear under arms, that he might ascertain the force with which he could take the field in case of necessity. A report was immediately circulated that they were to be led to Bonao against the rebels. Not above seventy men appeared under arms, and of these not forty were to be relied upon. One affected to be lame, another ill; some had relations, and others had friends among the followers of Roldan: almost all were disaffected to the service *.

Columbus saw that a resort to arms would only serve to betray his own weakness and the power of the rebels, and would completely prostrate the

* Hist. del Almirante, c. 78.

dignity and authority of government. It was necessary to temporize, therefore, however humiliating such conduct might be deemed. He had detained the five ships for eighteen days in port, hoping in some way to have put an end to this rebellion, so as to send home favourable accounts of the island to the Sovereigns. The provisions of the ships, however, were wasting. The Indian prisoners on board were suffering and perishing; several of them threw themselves overboard, or were suffocated with heat in the holds of the vessels. He was anxious also that as many of the discontented colonists as possible should make sail for Spain before any commotion should take place.

On the 18th of October, therefore, the ships put to sea *. Columbus wrote to the Sovereigns an account of the rebellion, and of his proffered pardon being refused. As Roldan pretended that it was a mere quarrel between him and the Adelantado, of which the admiral was not an impartial judge, the latter entreated that Roldan

* In one of these ships sailed the father of the venerable historian Las Casas, from whom he derived many of those facts of his history. Las Casas, l. i., c. 153.

might be summoned to Spain, where their Majesties might be his judges; or that an investigation might take place in presence of Alonzo Sanchez de Carvajal, who was friendly to Roldan, and of Miguel Ballester, as witness on the part of the Adelantado. He attributed, in a great measure, the troubles of this island to his own long detention in Spain, and the delays thrown in his way by those who had been appointed to assist him, who had retarded the departure of the ships with supplies, until the colony had been reduced to the greatest scarcity. Hence had arisen discontent, murmuring, and finally rebellion. He entreated their Majesties, in the most pressing manner, that the affairs of the colony might not be neglected, and that those at Seville, who had charge of its concerns, might be instructed at least not to devise impediments instead of assistance. He alluded to his chastisement of the contemptible Ximeno Beviesco, the insolent minion of Fonseca, and entreated that neither that nor any other circumstance might be allowed to prejudice him in the Royal favour, through the misrepresentations of designing men. He assured them that the

natural resources of the island required nothing but good management to supply all the wants of the colonists; but that the latter were indolent and profligate. He proposed to send home, by every ship, as in the present instance, a number of the discontented and worthless, to be replaced by sober and industrious men. He begged also that ecclesiastics might be sent out for the instruction and conversion of the Indians; and, what was equally necessary, for the reformation of the dissolute Spaniards. He required also a man learned and experienced in the law, to officiate as judge over the island, together with several officers of the royal revenue. Nothing could surpass the soundness and policy of these suggestions; but unfortunately one clause marred the moral beauty of this excellent letter. He requested that for two years longer the Spaniards might be permitted to employ the Indians as slaves; only making use of such, however, as were captured in wars and insurrections. Columbus had the usage of the age in excuse for this suggestion; but it is at variance with his usual

benignity of feeling, and his paternal conduct towards these unfortunate people.

At the same time he wrote another letter, giving an account of his recent voyage, accompanied by a chart, and by specimens of the gold, and particularly of the pearls found in the gulph of Paria. He called especial attention to the latter, as being the first specimens of pearls found in the new world. It was in this letter that he described the newly discovered continent in such enthusiastic terms; as the most favoured part of the east, the source of inexhaustible treasures, the supposed seat of the terrestrial Paradise; and he promised to prosecute the discovery of its glorious realms with the three remaining ships, as soon as the affairs of the island should permit.

By this opportunity, Roldan and his friends likewise sent letters to Spain, endeavouring to justify their rebellion by charging Columbus and his brothers with oppression and injustice, and painting their whole conduct in the blackest colours. It would naturally be supposed that the representations of such men would have little

weight in the balance against the tried merits and exalted services of Columbus: but they had numerous friends and relatives in Spain; they had the popular prejudice on their side, and there were designing persons in the confidence of the Sovereigns ready to advocate their cause. Columbus, to use his own simple but affecting words, was "absent, envied, and a foreigner in the land*."

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind., l. i., c. 157.

CHAPTER III.

ARRANGEMENT WITH THE REBELS.

[1498.]

The ships being despatched, Columbus resumed his negociation with the rebels. He was determined to put an end to this sedition at any sacrifice; for, until it should be set at rest, not only the affairs of the island would remain in a distracted and ruinous state, but all his splendid plans of discovery would be interrupted. His ships lay idle in the harbour, though a region of apparently boundless wealth was to be explored. He had intended to send his brother on the discovery, but the active and military spirit of the Adelantado rendered his presence indispensable, in case the rebels should come to open violence. Such were the difficulties which he had to encounter at every step of his generous and magnanimous enterprises; impeded at one time by the insidious intrigues of crafty men in place, and checked at another by the insolent turbulence of a handful of ruffians.

Columbus held earnest consultations with the most important persons about him. He found that much of the popular discontent was attributed to the strict rule of his brother, who was accused of dealing out justice with a rigorous hand. Las Casas, however, who saw all the testimony collected from various sources with respect to the conduct of the Adelantado, acquits him of all charge of the kind, and affirms that, with respect to Roldan in particular, he had exerted great forbearance. Columbus, by the advice of his counsellors, and by the suggestions of his own forgiving heart, was resolved to try the alternative of extreme lenity. He wrote a letter to Roldan, dated the 20th of October, couched in the most conciliating terms, calling to mind past kindnesses, and expressing the affliction he had suffered at finding such feud existing between him and the Adelantado. He entreated him, for the common good, and for the sake of his own reputation, which stood well with the sovereigns, not to persist in his present insubordination. He again repeated his assurance, that he and his companions might

come to him, under the faith of his word for the inviolability of their persons.

There was a difficulty as to who should be the bearer of this letter. The rebels had declared that they would receive no one as mediator but Alonzo Sanchez de Carvajal. Strong doubts, however, existed in the mind of those about Columbus as to the integrity of that officer. They observed that he had suffered Roldan to remain two days on board of his caravel at Xaragua; had furnished him with weapons and stores; had neglected to detain him on board, when he knew him to be a rebel; had not exerted himself to retake the deserters; had been escorted on his way to San Domingo by the rebels, and had sent refreshments to them at Bonao. It was alleged, moreover, that he had given himself out as a colleague of Columbus, appointed by government to have a watch and controul over his conduct. It was suggested, that, in advising the rebels to approach San Domingo, he had intended, in case the admiral did not arrive, to unite his pretended authority as colleague, to that of Roldan, as chief

judge, and to seize upon the reins of government. Finally, the desire of the rebels to have him sent to them as an agent, was cited as a proof that he was to join them as a leader, and that the standard of rebellion was to be hoisted at Bonao*. These circumstances, for some time, perplexed the mind of Columbus: but he reflected that Carvajal, as far as he had had an opportunity of observing his conduct, had behaved like a man of honour and integrity; most of the circumstances alleged against him admitted of a construction in his favour; the rest were mere rumours, and he had unfortunately experienced, in his own case, how easily the fairest actions, and the fairest characters, may be falsified by rumour. He discarded, at once, all suspicion, and determined to confide implicitly in Carvajal; nor had he ever any reason to repent of his confidence.

The admiral had scarcely despatched this letter, when he received one from the leaders of the rebels, which had been written several days previously. In this, they not merely vindicated themselves from the charge of rebellion, but claimed

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 78.

great merit, as having dissuaded their followers from a resolution to kill the Adelantado, in revenge of his oppressions, and prevailed upon them to await patiently for redress from the admiral. A month had elapsed since his arrival, during which they had waited anxiously for his orders, but he had manifested nothing but irritation against them, notwithstanding the great evils which they had prevented. They declared, therefore, that their honour and safety required that they should withdraw from his service, and they accordingly demanded their discharge. This letter was dated from Bonao, the 17th of October, and signed by Francisco Roldan, Adrian de Moxica, Pedro de Gamez, and Diego de Escobar *.

In the mean time, Carvajal arrived at Bonao, accompanied by Miguel Ballester. They found the rebels full of arrogance and presumption. The conciliating letter of the admiral, however, enforced by the earnest persuasions of Carvajal, and the virtuous admonitions of the veteran Ballester, had a favourable effect on several of the leaders, who had more intellect than their brutal

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 79. Herrera, d. 1, l. iii., c. 13.

followers. Roldan, Gamez, Escobar, and two or three others, were disposed to go to the admiral. They had actually mounted their horses for the purpose, when they were detained by the clamorous opposition of their men. These were too infatuated with their idle, licentious mode of life, to relish the idea of a return to labour and discipline. They insisted that it was a matter which concerned them all; whatever arrangement was to be made, therefore, should be made in public, in writing, and subject to their approbation or dissent. A day or two elapsed before this clamour could be appeased. Roldan then wrote to the admiral, that his followers objected to his coming, unless a written assurance, or passport, were sent, protecting the persons of himself and such as should accompany him. Miguel Ballester wrote, at the same time, to the admiral, a letter of cautious and earnest counsel, urging him to agree to whatever terms the rebels might demand. He represented their forces as continually augmenting, and that the soldiers of his garrison were daily deserting to them. He gave it as his opinion, that, unless some compromise were speedily effected, and the

rebels shipped off to Spain, not merely the authority, but even the person of the admiral would be in danger; for though the Hidalgos and the immediate officers and servants of Columbus, would, doubtless, die in his service, yet he feared that the common people were but little to be depended upon *.

Columbus felt the increasing urgency of the case, and immediately sent the required passport. Roldan came to San Domingo; but, from his conduct, it appeared as if he sought rather to make partisans, and gain deserters, than to arrange any terms of reconciliation. He had several conversations with the admiral, and several letters passed between them. He made many complaints, and numerous demands; Columbus made large concessions †, but some of the pretensions were too arrogant to be admitted. Nothing definite was arranged. Roldan departed under pretext of conferring with his people, promising to send his terms in writing. The admiral sent his Mayordomo, Diego de Salamanca, to treat in his behalf ‡.

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind., l. i., c. 153.
† Idem. c. 158.
‡ Hist. del. Almirante, c. 79.

On the 6th of November, Roldan wrote a letter from Bonao, containing his terms, and requested that a reply might be sent to him to Conception, as scarcity of provisions obliged him to leave Bonao. He added that he should wait for a reply until the following Monday (the 11th.) There was an insolent menace implied in this note, accompanied as it was by the most insolent demands. The admiral found it impossible to comply with the latter, but to manifest his lenient disposition, and to take from the rebels all plea of rigour, he had a proclamation affixed for thirty days at the gate of the fortress; promising full indulgence and complete oblivion of the past to Roldan and his followers, or to any of them who should return to the service of the crown, and present themselves before the admiral within the course of a month, and free conveyance for all such as wished to return to Spain; but threatening to execute justice upon those who should not appear within the limited time. A copy of this paper he sent to Roldan by Carvajal, with a letter, stating the impossibility of a compliance with his terms, but offering to agree to any compact that should be

drawn up with the approbation of Carvajal and Salamanca.

When Carvajal arrived, he found the veteran Ballester actually besieged in his fortress of Conception by Roldan, under pretext of claiming, in his official character of Alcalde mayor, a culprit who had taken refuge there from justice. He had cut off the supply of water from the fort, by way of distressing it into a surrender. When Carvajal posted up the proclamation of the admiral on the gate of the fortress, the rebels scoffed at the proffered amnesty, saying that, in a little while, they would oblige the admiral to ask the same at their hands. The earnest intercessions of Carvajal, however, brought the leaders at length to reflection, and through his mediation articles of capitulation were drawn up. By these it was agreed that Roldan and his followers should embark for Spain from the port of Xaragua in two ships, which should be fitted out and victualled within fifty days. That they should each receive from the admiral a certificate of good conduct, and an order for the amount of their pay, up to the actual date. That slaves should be given to them,

as had been given to others, in consideration of services performed; and as several of their company had wives, natives of the island, who were pregnant, or had lately been delivered, that they might take them with them, if willing to go, in place of the slaves. That satisfaction should be made for property of some of the company which had been sequestrated, and for live stock which had belonged to Francisco Roldan. There were other conditions, providing for the security of their persons; and it was stipulated that, if no reply were received to these terms within eight days, the whole should be void*.

This agreement was signed by Roldan and his companions at Fort Conception on the 16th of November, and by the admiral at San Domingo on the 21st. At the same time, he proclaimed a further act of grace, permitting such as chose to remain in the island either to come to San Domingo, and enter into the royal service, or to hold lands in any part of the island. They preferred, however, to follow the fortunes of Roldan, who departed with his band for Xaragua, to await the arrival of

* Hist. del Almirante, c. 80.

the ships, accompanied by Miguel Ballester, sent by the admiral to superintend the preparations for their embarkation.

It was a grievous trial to the spirit of Columbus, to see his projected enterprise to Terra Firma impeded by such contemptible obstacles; and that the ships which should have borne his brother to explore that newly-found continent, should be devoted to the use of this turbulent and worthless rabble. He consoled himself, however, with the reflection, that all the mischief which had so long been lurking in the island would thus be at once shipped off, and that thenceforth every thing would be restored to order and tranquillity. He ordered every exertion to be made, therefore, to get the ships in readiness to be sent round to Xaragua; but the scarcity of sea-stores, and the difficulty of completing the arrangements for such a voyage in the disordered state of the colony, delayed their departure far beyond the stipulated time. Feeling that he had been compelled to a kind of deception towards the sovereigns, in the certificate of good conduct which he had given to Roldan and his followers, Columbus wrote a letter to them, informing

them of the real character and conduct of those delinquents. That they had resisted authority, prevented the Indians from paying tribute, pillaged the island, carried off large quantities of gold, and the daughters of several of the caciques. That the certificate of good conduct which he had given them, had been in conformity to the advice of the principal persons about him, and wrung from him by the exigency of the case, the whole island being threatened with ruin by their rebellion. He advised, therefore, that they should be seized, and their slaves and treasure taken from them, until their conduct could be properly investigated. This letter he intrusted to a confidential person who was to go in one of the ships*.

The rebels having left the neighbourhood, and the affairs of San Domingo being in a state of security, Columbus put his brother Don Diego in temporary command, and departed with the Adelantado on a tour to visit the various stations, and to restore the island to order.

* Herrera, Hist. Ind., decad. 1, l. iii., c. 16.

CHAPTER IV.

ANOTHER MUTINY OF THE REBELS; AND SECOND ARRANGEMENT WITH THEM.

[1499.]

Several months were consumed by Columbus and the Adelantado in their tour through the island. Everything had fallen into confusion during the late troubles. The mines were abandoned, the farms lay neglected; the flocks and herds, which were to be kept for breeding, were scattered or destroyed; the caciques had ceased to pay their tribute, everything required to be re-arranged. Still Columbus flattered himself, now that the island was relieved from the evil spirits which had lately roamed about it, that everything, by strenuous exertion, would soon be restored to a prosperous condition. His little intervals of calm, however, were always sure to be followed by a violent storm. While he was soothing himself with the idea that Roldan and his band were tossing on the high seas, on their way to Spain, he learnt, to his infinite regret, that the voyage was interrupted,

and that the rebels had broken out into new seditions.

The two caravels had sailed from St. Domingo for Xaragua about the end of February; but, encountering a violent storm, they had been obliged to put into one of the harbours of the island, where they were detained until the end of March. One was so disabled as to be compelled to return to San Domingo. Another vessel was despatched to supply its place, in which the indefatigable Carvajal set sail, to expedite the embarkation of the rebels. It was eleven days in making the voyage, and found the other caravel at Xaragua.

In the mean time the followers of Roldan had changed their minds, and refused to embark, either fearing to return to Spain, or loth to abandon their present unrestrained and dissolute mode of life. They pretended, as usual, to throw all the blame on Columbus, affirming that he had purposely delayed the ships far beyond the time stipulated in their capitulations; that he had sent them in a state not sea-worthy, and short of provisions, with many other charges, artfully founded on circumstances over which they knew the admiral

could have no control. Carvajal made a formal protest before a notary who had accompanied him, and finding that the ships were suffering great injury and their provisions failing, he sent them back to St. Domingo, and set out on his return by land. Roldan mounted his horse to accompany him a little distance: he was evidently disturbed in mind. He feared to return to Spain, yet was shrewd enough to know that his present situation at the head of a band of dissolute men, acting in defiance of authority, had no security in it, and must eventually lead to his destruction. What stronger tie had he upon the fidelity of those men than all the sacred obligations which they had violated? After riding thoughtfully for some distance, he paused, and requested some private conversation with Carvajal before they parted. They alighted under the shade of a tree. Here Roldan made further professions of the loyalty of his intentions, and finally declared, that if the admiral would once more send him a written security for his person, with the guarantee also of the principal persons about him, he would come to treat with him, and trusted that the whole

matter would be arranged on terms satisfactory to both parties. This offer, however, he added, must be kept secret from his followers.

Carvajal was overjoyed at this prospect of a final arrangement, and made all haste to communicate the request of Roldan to the admiral. The latter immediately forwarded the required passport or security, sealed with the royal seal, accompanied by a letter written in amicable terms, exhorting him to quiet obedience to the authority of the sovereigns. Several of the principal persons also, who were with the admiral, wrote, at his request, a letter of security to Roldan, pledging themselves for the safety of himself and his followers during the negotiation, provided they did nothing hostile to the royal authority or its representative.

In the midst of his perplexities, while Columbus, with the most unwearied assiduity and loyal zeal, was endeavouring to bring the island back to its obedience and to promote the interest of its sovereigns, he received a letter from Spain, in reply to the earnest representations which he had made in the preceding autumn of the distracted state of the colony and the outrages of these lawless men,

and requesting the royal countenance and support under his difficulties. The letter was written by his invidious enemy, the Bishop Fonseca, superintendant of Indian affairs. It informed him that the accounts he had transmitted to Spain of the alleged insurrection of Roldan had been received, but that this matter must be suffered to remain in suspense, as the sovereigns would investigate and remedy it presently*.

This cold reply to his earnest representations had the most disheartening effect upon Columbus. He saw that his complaints had little weight with the government; that the misrepresentations of his enemies were prejudicing him with the sovereigns, and he anticipated redoubled insolence on the part of the rebels, when they should discover the little influence he possessed in Spain. Full of zeal, however, for the success of his undertaking, and of fidelity to the interests of the sovereigns, he resolved to spare no personal sacrifices of comfort or dignity, but at any cost to appease the troubles of the island. Eager to expedite the negotiation with Roldan, therefore, he

* Herrera, decad. 1, l. iii., c. 16.

sailed in the latter part of August with two caravels to the port of Azna, west of San Domingo, and much nearer to Xaragua. He was accompanied by several of the most important personages of the colony. Roldan repaired thither likewise, with the turbulent Adrian de Moxica, and a number of his band. The concessions he had already obtained from the admiral had increased his presumption; and he had, doubtless, received intelligence of the cold manner in which the complaints of the admiral had been received in Spain. He conducted himself more like a conqueror, exacting triumphant terms, than a delinquent seeking to procure pardon by atonement.

He came on board of the caravel, and with his usual effrontery, propounded the preliminaries upon which he and his companions were disposed to negotiate.

First, that he should be permitted to send several of his company, to the number of fifteen, to Spain, in the vessels which were at St. Domingo. Secondly, that those who remained should have lands granted them to cultivate, in place of royal pay. Thirdly, that it should be proclaimed, that

everything charged against Roldan and his party, had been grounded upon false testimony, and the machinations of persons who desired to injure them, and who were disaffected to the royal service. Fourthly, that Roldan should be reinstated in his office of alcalde mayor, or chief judge *.

These were hard and insolent conditions to commence with, but they were granted. Roldan then went on shore, and communicated them to his companions. For two days the insurgents held a consultation among themselves, at the end of which they sent their capitulations, drawn up in form, and couched in arrogant language, including all the stipulations granted at Fort Conception, with those recently demanded by Roldan, and concluding with one, more insolent than all the rest, namely, that if the admiral should fail in the fulfilment of any of these articles, they should have a right to assemble together, and to compel his performance of them by force, or by any other means they might think proper †. Thus the conspirators were not only seeking to obtain exculpa-

* Herrera, decad. 1, l. iii., c. 16.

† Herrera, decad. 1, l. iii., c. 16. Hist. del Almirante, c. 38.

tion of the past, but a pretext for the future, in case they should again rise in rebellion.

The mind grows wearied and impatient with recording, and the heart of the generous reader must burn with indignation at perusing, this protracted and ineffectual struggle of a man of the exalted merits and matchless services of Columbus, in the toils of such contemptible miscreants. Surrounded by doubt and danger, a foreigner among a jealous people, an unpopular commander in a mutinous island, distrusted and slighted by the government he was seeking to serve, and creating suspicion by his very services, he knew not where to look for faithful advice, or efficient aid, or candid judgment. The very ground on which he stood seemed giving way under him. He understood that seditious plans began to be formed among his own people. They saw the impunity with which the rebels had rioted in the possession of one of the finest parts of the island; they now began to talk among themselves of following their example; of abandoning the standard of the admiral, and seizing upon the province of

Higuey, at the eastern extremity of the island, which was said to contain valuable mines of gold.

Thus critically situated, disregarding every consideration of personal pride and dignity, and determined, at any individual sacrifice, to secure the interests of an ungrateful sovereign, Columbus forced himself to sign this most humiliating capitulation. He trusted that afterwards, when he could gain quiet access to the royal ear, he should be able to convince the king and queen that it had been compulsory, and forced from him by the extraordinary difficulties in which he had been placed, and the imminent perils of the colony. Before signing it, however, he inserted a stipulation, that the commands of the sovereigns, of himself, and of the justices appointed by him, should be punctually obeyed *.

* Herrera, Hist. Ind., decad. 1, l. iii., c. 16.

CHAPTER V.

GRANTS MADE TO ROLDAN AND HIS FOLLOWERS. DEPARTURE OF SEVERAL OF THE REBELS FOR SPAIN.

[1499.]

When Roldan resumed his office of alcalde mayor, or chief judge, he displayed all the arrogance to be expected from one who had intruded himself into power by profligate means. While at the city of San Domingo, he was always surrounded by his faction, he communed only with the dissolute and disaffected, and, having all the turbulent and desperate men of the community at his beck, he was enabled to intimidate the quiet and loyal by his frowns. He bore an impudent front against the authority even of Columbus himself, discharging from office one Rodrigo Perez, a lieutenant of the admiral, declaring that no one should bear a staff of office in the island but such as he appointed *. Columbus had a difficult and painful task in bearing with the insolence of this man, and

* Herrera, Hist. Ind., decad. 1, l. iii., c. 16.

of the shameless rabble that had returned, under his auspices, to the settlements. He tacitly permitted many abuses, endeavouring by mildness and indulgence to allay the jealousies and prejudices which had been awakened against him, and by various concessions to lure the factious to the performance of their duty. To such of the colonists generally as preferred to remain in the island, he offered a choice either of royal pay or of portions of lands, with a number of Indians, some free, others as slaves, to assist in the cultivation. The latter was generally preferred; and grants were made out, in which he endeavoured, as much as possible, to combine the benefit of the individual with the interests of the colony.

Roldan presented a memorial signed by upwards of one hundred of his late followers, demanding grants of lands and licenses to settle, and choosing Xaragua for their place of abode. The admiral feared to trust such a numerous body of factious partisans in so remote a province, lest they should foment some new rebellion. He contrived, therefore, to distribute them in various parts

of the island; some at Bonao, where their settlement gave origin to the town of that name; others on the bank of the Rio Verde, or Green River, in the Vega; others about six leagues from thence at St. Jago. He assigned to them liberal portions of land, and numerous Indian slaves, taken in the wars. He made an arrangement, also, by which the caciques in their vicinity, instead of paying tribute, should furnish parties of their subjects, free Indians, to assist the colonists in the cultivation of their lands: a kind of feudal service, which was the origin of the repartimientos, or distributions of the free Indians among the colonists, afterwards generally adopted and shamefully abused throughout the Spanish colonies, a source of intolerable hardships and oppressions to the unhappy natives, and which greatly contributed to exterminate them in the island of Hispaniola*. Columbus considered the island in the light of a conquered country, and arrogated to himself all the rights of a conqueror, in the name of the sovereigns for whom he fought. Of course all his companions in the enterprise were en-

* Herrera, decad. 1, l. iii., c. 16.

titled to take part in the acquired territory, and to establish themselves there as feudal lords, reducing the natives to the condition of villains or vassals*. This was an arrangement widely different from his original intentions; for he was disposed to treat the natives with amity and kindness, as peaceful subjects of the crown. But all his plans had been subverted by the violence and licentiousness of others, and his present measures appear to have been forced upon him by the exigency of the times. As a kind of police to restore the island to order, he appointed a captain with an armed band, with orders to range the provinces, to oblige the Indians to attend to the payment of their tributes, to watch over the conduct of the colonists, and to check the least appearance of mutiny or insurrection †.

Having sought and obtained such ample provisions for his followers, Roldan was not more modest in making demands for himself. He claimed certain lands in the vicinity of Isabella, as having belonged to him before his rebellion;

* Muñoz, Hist. N. Mundo, l. vi. § 50.

† Hist. del Almirante, c. 84.

also a royal farm, devoted to the rearing of poultry, situated in the Vega, and called La Esperanza. These the admiral granted to him, with permission to employ, as the cultivators of the farm, the subjects of the cacique whose ears had been cut off by Alonzo de Ojeda in his first military expedition into the Vega. Roldan received also grants of land in Xaragua, and a variety of live stock from the cattle and other animals belonging to the crown. These grants were made to him provisionally, until the pleasure of the sovereigns should be known *; for Columbus yet trusted, that, when their majesties understood the seditions and violences by which these concessions had been extorted from him, the ringleaders of the rebels would not merely be stripped of their ill-gotten possessions, but would receive that punishment which their offences deserved.

Roldan having now enriched himself beyond his hopes, requested permission of Columbus to visit his lands. This was granted with great reluctance. He immediately departed for the Vega, and stopping at Bonao, his late head-quarters, he

* Herrera, decad. 1, l. iii., c. 16.

made Pedro Requelme, one of his most active confederates, alcalde, or judge of the place, with the power of arresting all delinquents, and sending them prisoners to the fortress of Conception, where he reserved to himself the right of sentencing them. This appointment gave great displeasure to Columbus, being an assumption of powers not vested in the office of Roldan, who had no right to create inferior alcaldes. Other circumstances created apprehensions in his mind of further designs of the late insurgents. Pedro Requelme, under pretext of erecting farming buildings for his cattle, began to erect a strong edifice on a hill, advantageously posted, and capable of being converted into a formidable fortress. This, it was whispered, was done in concert with Roldan, by way of securing a strong hold in which they might fortify themselves in case of need. Being in the neighbourhood of the Vega, where so many of their late partisans were settled, it would have formed a dangerous rallying place for any new sedition. The designs of Requelme were suspected and his proceedings opposed by Pedro de Arana, a loyal and honourable man, who was on the spot. Re-

presentations were made by both parties to the admiral, who, filled with uneasiness at this suspicious measure on the part of Requelme, prohibited him from proceeding with the construction of his edifice *.

Columbus had prepared to return, with his brother Don Bartholomew, to Spain, where he felt that his presence was of the utmost importance to place the late events of the island in a proper light. He had experienced the inefficacy of letters of explanation, which were liable to be counteracted by the misrepresentations of malevolent enemies. The island, however, was still in a feverish state. He was not well assured of the fidelity of the late rebels, though so dearly purchased; there was a rumour of a threatened descent into the Vega, by the mountain tribes of Ciguay, to attempt the rescue of their captive cacique Mayobanex, who was still detained a prisoner in the fortress of Conception. Tidings were brought about the same time from the western parts of the island, that four strange ships had arrived at the coast, under suspicious appearances. These circumstances obliged

* Herrera, decad. 1, l. iii., c. 16. Hist. del Almirante, c. 83, 84.

Columbus to postpone his departure for the present; and held him involved in the affairs of this favourite but fatal island.

The two caravels were despatched for Spain in the beginning of October, taking such of the colonists as chose to return, and among them a number belonging to the party of Roldan. Some of those took with them three slaves, others two, and others one; and some of them carried away the daughters of caciques whom they had beguiled from their families and homes. At these iniquities, no less than at many others which equally grieved his spirit, the admiral was obliged to connive. He was conscious, at the same time, that he was sending home a reinforcement of enemies and false witnesses, to defame his character and traduce his conduct, but he had no alternative. To counteract, as much as possible, their misrepresentations, he sent by the same caravel, the loyal and upright veteran Miguel Ballester, together with Garcia de Barrantés, empowered to attend to his affairs at court, and furnished with the depositions which had been taken relative to the conduct of Rolda and his accomplices.

He wrote at the same time to the sovereigns, entreating them to inquire into the truth of the late transactions, and to act as they thought best. He stated his opinion that the capitulations which he had signed with the rebels were null and void, for various reasons; that they had been extorted from him by violence, and at sea, where he did not exercise the office of viceroy; that there had been two trials relative to the insurrection, and the insurgents having been condemned as traitors, it was not in the power of the admiral to absolve them from their criminality; that the capitulations treated of matters touching the royal revenue, over which he had no control, without the intervention of the proper officers; and that Francisco Roldan and his companions, on leaving Spain, had taken an oath to be faithful to the sovereigns, and to the admiral in their name. For these and similar reasons, some just, others rather sophistical, he urged their majesties not to consider themselves bound to ratify the compulsory terms which he had ceded to these profligate men, but to inquire into their offences, and treat them accordingly *.

* Herrera, decad. 1, l. iii., c. 16.

He repeated the request made in a former letter, that a learned man might be sent out as judge to administer the laws in the island, since he himself had been charged with rigour, although conscious of having always observed a clemency. He requested also that discreet persons should be sent out to form a council, and others for certain fiscal employments, entreating, however, that their powers should be so limited and defined, in their respective appointments, as not to interfere with his own dignity and privileges. He bore strongly on this point; for he felt that his prerogatives had, on former occasions, been grievously invaded. He observed, that he might be mistaken, but it appeared to him that princes ought to show much confidence in their governors; for without the royal favour to give them strength and consequence, everything went to ruin under their command—a sound maxim, forced from the admiral by his recent experience, in which much of his own perplexities, and the triumph of the rebels, had been caused by the distrust of the crown, and its inattention to his remonstrances.

Finding age and infirmity creeping upon him,

and his health being much impaired by his last voyage, Columbus began to think of his son Diego, as an active coadjutor to share the toils and cares of his station; and who, being destined as his successor, might gain experience under his eye, for the future discharge of his high duties. Diego was still serving as a page at the court, but he was grown to man's estate, and he was capable of entering into the important concerns of life: Columbus entreated, therefore, that he might be sent out to assist him, as he felt himself infirm and less capable of exertion *.

* Herrera, decad. 1, lib. iii., c. 16.

CHAPTER VI.

ARRIVAL OF OJEDA WITH A SQUADRON AT THE WESTERN PART OF THE ISLAND. ROLDAN SENT TO MEET HIM.

[1499.]

Among the causes which induced Columbus to postpone his departure for Spain, has been mentioned the arrival of four ships at the western part of the island. These had anchored on the 5th of September in a harbour a little below Jacquemel, apparently with the design of cutting woods used in dyeing, which abound in that neighbourhood, and of carrying off the natives for slaves. Further reports informed him that these ships were commanded by Alonzo de Ojeda, the same hot-headed and bold-hearted cavalier who had distinguished himself on various occasions in the previous voyages of discovery, and particularly in the capture of the cacique Caonabo. Knowing the daring and adventurous spirit of this man, Columbus felt much disturbed at his visiting the island in this clandestine manner, on what appeared to be little better

than a freebooting expedition. To call him to account, and to oppose his aggressions, however, required an agent of spirit and address. No one seemed better fitted for the purpose than Roldan. He was as daring as Ojeda, and of a more crafty character. An expedition of the kind would occupy the attention of himself and his partisans, and divert them from any schemes of mischief. The large concessions recently made to them would, he trusted, secure their present fidelity, rendering it more profitable for them to be loyal than rebellious.

Roldan gladly undertook the enterprise. He had nothing further to gain by sedition, and he was anxious to secure his ill-gotten possessions and effects by public services, which should atone for his past offences. He was a vain as well as an active man, and took a pride in acquitting himself well in an expedition which called for both courage and shrewdness. Departing from St. Domingo with two caravels, he arrived on the 29th of September within two leagues of the harbour where the ships of Ojeda were anchored. Here he landed with five-and-twenty resolute fol-

lowers, well armed, and accustomed to range the forests. He sent five scouts to reconnoitre. They brought word that Ojeda was on shore, several leagues distant from his ships, with only fifteen men, who were employed in making cassava bread in an Indian village. Roldan threw himself between Ojeda and his ships, thinking to take him by surprise. Ojeda, however, was apprized of his approach by the Indians, with whom the very name of Roldan inspired terror, from his late excesses in Xaragua. Ojeda saw his danger; he supposed Roldan had been sent in pursuit of him, and he found himself cut off from any retreat to his ships. With his usual intrepidity he immediately presented himself before Roldan, attended merely by half a dozen followers. The latter craftily began by conversing on general topics. He then inquired into his motives for landing on the island, particularly on that remote and lonely part, without first reporting his arrival to the admiral. Ojeda replied, that he had been on a voyage of discovery, and had put in there in distress, to repair his ships and procure provisions. Roldan then demanded, in the name of the government, a

sight of the license under which he sailed. Ojeda, who knew the resolute character of the man he had to deal with, restrained his natural impetuosity, and replied that his papers were on board of his ship. He declared his intention, on his departure from thence, to go to San Domingo, and pay his homage to the admiral, having many things to tell him which were for his private ear alone. He intimated to Roldan that the admiral had completely fallen into disgrace at court; that there was a talk of taking from him his command, and that the queen, his patroness, was ill beyond all hopes of recovery. This intimation, it is presumed, was referred to by Roldan in his despatches to the admiral, wherein he mentioned that certain things had been communicated to him by Ojeda, which he did not think it safe to confide to a letter.

Roldan now repaired to the ships. He found several persons on board with whom he was acquainted, and who had already been in Hispaniola. They confirmed the truth of what Ojeda had said, and shewed a licence signed by the Bishop of Fonseca, as superintendant of the affairs

of the Indias, authorizing him to sail on a voyage of discovery*.

It appeared, from the report of Ojeda and his followers, that the glowing accounts sent home by Columbus of his late discoveries on the coast of Paria, his magnificent speculations with respect to the riches of the newly-found country, and the specimens of pearls which he had transmitted to the sovereigns, had inflamed the cupidity of various adventurers. Ojeda happened to be at that time in Spain. He was a favourite of the Bishop Fonseca, and obtained a sight of the letter written by the admiral to the sovereigns, and the charts and maps of his route by which it was accompanied. Ojeda knew Columbus to be embarrassed by the seditions of Hispaniola; he found, by his conversations with Fonseca and other of the admiral's enemies, that strong doubts and jealousies existed in the mind of the king with respect to his conduct, and that his approaching downfal was confidently predicted. The idea of taking advantage of these circumstances struck Ojeda, and, by a private enterprise, he hoped to be the first in gathering

* Herrera, decad. 1, l. iv., c. 3.

the wealth of these newly-discovered regions. He communicated his project to his patron, Fonseca. The latter was but too ready to do anything that might defeat the plans and obscure the glory of Columbus; and it may be added, that he always shewed himself more disposed to patronise mercenary adventurers than upright and high-minded men. He granted Ojeda every facility, furnishing him with copies of the papers and charts of Columbus, by which to direct himself in his course, and granted him a letter of license signed with his own name, though not with that of the sovereigns. In this, it was stipulated that he should not touch at any land belonging to the King of Portugal, nor any that had been discovered by Columbus prior to 1495. The last provision shews the perfidious artifice of Fonseca, as it left Paria and the Pearl Islands free to the visits of Ojeda, they having been discovered by Columbus subsequent to the designated year. The ships were to be fitted out at the charges of the adventurers, and a certain proportion of the products of the voyage were to be rendered to the crown.

Under this license Ojeda fitted out four ships at

Seville, assisted by many eager and wealthy speculators. Among the number was the celebrated Americo Vespucio, a Florentine merchant, who was considered well acquainted with geography and navigation. The principal pilot of the expedition was Juan de la Cosa, a mariner of great repute, a disciple of the admiral, whom he had accompanied in his first voyage of discovery, and in that along the southern coast of Cuba, and round the island of Jamaica. There were several also of the mariners, and Bartholomew Roldan, a distinguished pilot, who had been with Columbus in his voyage to Paria*. Such was the expedition which, by a singular train of circumstances, eventually gave the name of this Florentine merchant, Americo Vespucio, to the whole of the New World.

This expedition had sailed in May, 1499. The adventurers had arrived on the southern continent, and had ranged along its coast, from two hundred leagues east of the Oronoco, to the Gulf of Paria. Guided by the charts of Columbus, they had passed through this gulf, and through the Coca del Dragon,

* Las Casas.

had kept along westward to Cape de la Vela, visiting the island of Margarita and the adjacent continent, and discovering the Gulf of Venezuela. They had subsequently touched at the Caribbee Islands, where they had fought with the fierce natives, and made many captives, with the intention of selling them in the slave-markets of Spain. From thence, being in need of supplies, they had sailed to Hispaniola, having performed the most extensive voyage hitherto made along the shores of the New World*.

Having collected all the informations that he could obtain concerning these voyagers, their adventures and designs, and trusting to the declaration of Ojeda, that he should proceed forthwith to present himself to the admiral, Roldan returned to San Domingo to render a report of his mission.

* Herrera, Hist. Ind., decad. 1, l. iv. c. 4. Muños, Hist. N. Mundo, part in MS. unpublished.

CHAPTER VII.

MANŒUVRES OF ROLDAN AND OJEDA.

[1500.]

When intelligence was brought to Columbus of the nature of the expedition of Ojeda, and the license under which he sailed, he considered himself deeply aggrieved, it being a direct infraction of his most important prerogatives, and sanctioned by authority that ought to have held them sacred. He awaited patiently, however, the promised visit of Alonzo de Ojeda to San Domingo, to obtain fuller explanations. Nothing was further from the intention of that roving commander than to keep such promise: he had made it merely to elude the vigilance of Roldan. As soon as he had refitted his vessels and obtained a supply of provisions, he sailed round to the coast of Xaragua, where he arrived in February. Here he was well received by the Spaniards resident in that province, who supplied all his wants. Among them were many of the late comrades of Roldan; loose, random characters, impatient of all order and re-

straint, and burning with animosity against the admiral, for having again brought them under the wholesome authority of the laws.

Knowing the rash and fearless character of Ojeda, and finding that there were jealousies between him and the admiral, they hailed him as a new leader, come to redress their fancied grievances, in place of Roldan, whom they considered as having deserted them. They made clamorous complaints to Ojeda of the injustice of the admiral, whom they charged with withholding from them the arrears of their pay.

Ojeda was a hot-headed man, with somewhat of a vaunting spirit, and immediately set himself up for a redresser of grievances. It is said also, that he gave himself out as authorized by government, in conjunction with Carvajal, to act as counsellors, or rather supervisors of the admiral; and that one of the first measures they were to take, was to enforce the payment of all salaries due to the servants of the crown*. It is questionable, however, whether Ojeda made any pretension of the kind, which could so readily be disproved,

* Hist. del Almirante, c. 84.

and would have tended to disgrace him with the government. It is probable that he was encouraged in his intermeddling, chiefly by his knowledge of the tottering state of the admiral's favour at court, and of his own security in the powerful protection of Fonseca. He may have imbibed also the opinion, diligently fostered by those with whom he had chiefly communicated in Spain, just before his departure, that these people had been driven to extremities by the oppression of the admiral and his brothers. Some feeling of generosity, therefore, it is probable, mingled with his usual love of action and enterprise, when he proposed to redress all their wrongs, to put himself at their head, march at once to San Domingo, and oblige the admiral to pay them on the spot, or expel him from the island.

The proposition of Ojeda was received with acclamations of transport by some of the rebels; others made objections. Quarrels arose: a ruffianly scene of violence and brawl ensued, in which several were killed and wounded on both sides; but the party for the expedition to San Domingo remained triumphant.

Fortunately for the peace and safety of the admiral, Roldan arrived in the neighbourhood, just at this critical juncture, attended by a crew of resolute followers. He had been despatched by Columbus to watch the movements of Ojeda, on hearing of his arrival on the coast of Xaragua. Roldan had been apprised of the violent scenes which were taking place, and sent to his old confederate Diego de Escobar, to follow him with all the trusty force he could collect. They reached Xaragua within a day of each other. An instance of the bad faith usual between bad men was now evinced. The former partisans of Roldan, finding him earnest in his intention of serving the government, and that there was no hope of engaging him in their new sedition, sought to take him by surprise, but his vigilance and celerity prevented them *.

Ojeda, when he heard of the approach of Roldan and Escobar, retired on board of his ships. Though of a daring spirit, he had no inclination, in the present instance, to come to blows, where

* Hist. del Almirante, ubi sup.

there was a certainty of desperate fighting, and no gain; and where he must raise his arm against government. Roldan now issued such remonstrances as he had been accustomed to receive. He wrote to Ojeda, reasoning with him on his conduct, and the confusion he was producing in the island, and invited him on shore to an amicable arrangement of all alleged grievances. Ojeda, knowing the crafty, violent character of Roldan, disregarded his repeated messages, and refused to venture within his power. He even seized one of his messengers, Diego de Truxillo, and landing suddenly at Xaragua, carried off another of his followers, named Toribio de Lenares; both of whom he detained in irons, on board of his vessel, as hostages for a certain Juan Pintor, a one-armed sailor, who had deserted; threatening to hang them if the deserter was not given up *.

Various manœvures took place between these two well-matched opponents; each wary of the address and prowess of the other. Ojeda made sail, and stood twelve leagues to the northward,

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind., l. i., c. 169. MS.

to the province of Cahay, one of the most beautiful and fertile parts of the country, and inhabited by a kind and gentle people. Here he landed with forty men, seizing upon whatever he could find of the provisions of the natives. Roldan and Escobar followed along shore, and were soon at his heels. Roldan then despatched Escobar in a light canoe, paddled swiftly by Indians, who approaching nearly within hail of the ship, informed Ojeda that, since he would not trust himself on shore, Roldan would come and confer with him on board, if he would send a boat for him.

Ojeda now thought himself secure of his enemy: he immediately despatched a boat within a short distance of the shore, where they lay on their oars, requiring Roldan to come to them. "How many may accompany me?" demanded the latter: "Only five or six," was the reply. Upon this Diego de Escobar and four others waded to the boat. The crew refused to admit more. Roldan then ordered one man to carry him to the barge, and another to walk by his side, and assist him. By this stratagem, his party was eight strong. The

instant he entered the boat, he ordered the oarsmen to row to shore. On their refusing, he and his companions attacked them sword in hand, wounded several, and made all prisoners, excepting an Indian archer, who, plunging under the water, escaped by swimming.

This was an important triumph for Roldan. Ojeda, anxious for the recovery of his boat, which was indispensable for the service of the ship, now made overtures of peace. He approached the shore in the smaller boat which was left him, taking with him his principal pilot, an arquebusier, and four oarsmen. Roldan entered the boat he had just captured, with seven rowers and fifteen fighting men, causing fifteen others to be ready on shore to embark in a large canoe, in case of need. A characteristic interview took place between these doughty antagonists, each keeping warily on his guard. Their conference was carried on at a distance. Ojeda justified his hostile movements by alleging that Roldan had come with an armed force to seize him. This the latter positively denied, promising him the most amicable reception from the admiral, in case he would repair to

San Domingo. An arrangement was at length effected; the boat was restored, and mutual restitution of the men took place, with the exception of Juan Pintor, the one-armed deserter, who had absconded; and on the following day, Ojeda, according to agreement, set sail to leave the island, threatening however to return at a future time, with more ships and men*.

Roldan waited in the neighbourhood, doubting the truth of his departure. In the course of a few days, word was brought him that Ojeda had landed on a distant part of the coast. He immediately pursued him with eighty men, in canoes, sending scouts by land. Before he arrived at the place, Ojeda had again made sail, and Roldan saw and heard no more of him. Las Casas asserts, however, that Ojeda departed either to some remote district of Hispaniola, or to the island of Porto Rico, where he made up what he called his *Cavalgada*, or droves of slaves; carrying off numbers of the unhappy natives, whom he sold in the slave-market of Cadiz †.

* Letter of Columbus to the Nurse of Prince Juan.

† Las Casas, l. i. c. 169.

CHAPTER VIII.

CONSPIRACY OF GUEVARA AND MOXICA.

[1500.]

When men have been accustomed to act falsely, they take great merit to themselves for an exertion of common honesty. The followers of Roldan were loud in trumpeting forth their unwonted loyalty, and the great services they had rendered to government in driving Ojeda from the island. Like all reformed knaves, they expected that their good conduct would be amply rewarded. Looking upon their leader as having every thing in his gift, and being well pleased with the delightful province of Cahay, they requested him to share the land among them, that they might settle there. Roldan would have had no hesitation in granting their request, had it been made during his freebooting career; but he was now anxious to establish a character for adherence to the laws. He declined, therefore, acceding to their wishes, until sanctioned by the admiral. Knowing, however,

that he had fostered a spirit among these men which it was dangerous to contradict, and that their rapacity, by long indulgence, did not admit of delay, he shared among them certain lands of his own, in the territory of his ancient host Behechio, cacique of Xaragua. He then wrote to the admiral for permission to return to San Domingo, and received a letter in reply, giving him many thanks and commendations for the diligence and address which he had manifested, but requesting him to remain for a time in Xaragua, lest Ojeda should be yet hovering about the coast, and disposed to make another descent in that province.

The troubles of the island were not yet at an end, but were destined again to break forth, and from somewhat of a romantic cause. There arrived about this time, at Xaragua, a young cava lier of noble family, named Don Hernando de Guevara. He possessed an agreeable person and winning manners, but was headstrong in his passions and dissolute in his principles. He was cousin to Adrian de Moxica, one of the most active ringleaders in the late rebellion of Roldan, and had conducted himself with such licentiousness at San

Domingo, that Columbus had banished him from the island. There being no other opportunity of embarking, he had been sent to Xaragua, to return to Spain in one of the ships of Ojeda, but arrived after their departure. Roldan received him favourably, on account of his old comrade, Adrian de Moxica, and permitted him to choose some place where he would reside, until further orders concerning him should arrive from the admiral. He chose the province of Cahay, at the place where Roldan had captured the boat of Ojeda. It was a delightful part of that beautiful coast; but the reason why Guevara chose it, was the vicinity to Xaragua. While at the latter place, in consequence of the indulgence of Roldan, he was favourably received at the house of Anacaona, the widow of Caonabo, and sister of the Cacique Behachio. That remarkable woman still retained her partiality to the Spaniards, notwithstanding the disgraceful scenes which had passed before her eyes; and the native dignity of her character had commanded the respect even of the dissolute rabble which had infested her province. By her late husband, the cacique Caonabo, she

had a daughter named Higuamota, just grown up, and greatly admired for her beauty. Guevara, being often in company with her, became enamoured, and his endearments soon won the heart of the simple Indian girl. It was to be near her that he chose Cahay as a residence, at a place where his cousin Adrian de Moxica kept a number of dogs and hawks, to be employed in the chase. Guevara delayed his departure. Roldan discovered the object that bound him to Xaragua, and warned him to desist from his pretensions and leave the province. Las Casas intimates that Roldan was himself attached to the young Indian beauty, and jealous of her preference of his rival. Anacaona, the mother, pleased with the gallant appearance and ingratiating manners of the youthful cavalier, favoured his attachment; especially as he sought her daughter in marriage. Notwithstanding the orders of Roldan, Guevara still lingered in Xaragua, in the house of Anacaona; and sending for a priest, desired him to baptize his intended bride.

When Roldan heard of this, he sent for Guevara, and rebuked him sharply for remaining at

Xaragua, and for attempting to deceive a person of the importance of Anacaona, by ensnaring the affections of her daughter. Guevara avowed the strength of his passion, and his correct intentions, and entreated permission to remain. Roldan was inflexible. He alleged that some evil construction might be put on his conduct by the admiral; but it is probable his true motive was a desire to send away a rival, who interfered with his own amorous designs. Guevara obeyed; but had scarce been three days at Cahay, when, unable to remain longer absent from the object of his passion, he returned to Xaragua, accompanied by four or five friends, and concealed himself in the dwelling of Anacaona. Roldan, who was at that time confined by a malady in his eyes, being apprised of his return, sent persons to upbraid him with his disobedience to orders, and to command him to return instantly to Cahay. The young cavalier now assumed a tone of defiance. He warned Roldan not to make foes when he had such great need of friends; for, to his certain knowledge, the admiral intended to behead him. Upon this, Roldan, exercising his powers of command, ordered

him to quit that part of the island, and repair to San Domingo, to present himself before the admiral. The thoughts of being banished entirely from the vicinity of his Indian beauty, checked the vehemence of the youth. He changed his tone of haughty defiance into one of humble supplication; and Roldan, appeased by this submission, permitted him to remain for the present in that part of the island.

Roldan was doomed to reap the fruits of the mischief he had sown. He had instilled wilfulness and violence into the hearts of his late followers, and now was exposed to the effects. Guevara, incensed at this opposition to his passion, meditated revenge. He soon made a party among the old comrades of Roldan, who detested, as a magistrate, the man they had idolized as a leader. It was concerted to rise suddenly upon him, and either to kill him or put out his eyes. Roldan was apprised of the plot, and proceeded with his usual promptness. Guevara was seized in the dwelling of Anacaona, in the presence of his intended bride; seven of his accomplices were likewise arrested. Roldan immediately sent an

account of the affair to the admiral, professing, at present, to do nothing without his authority, and declaring himself not competent to judge impartially in the case. Columbus, who was at that time at Fort Conception, in the Vega, ordered that the prisoners should be conducted to the fortress of San Domingo.

These vigorous measures on the part of Roldan against his old comrades, produced immediate commotions in the island. When Adrian de Moxica heard that his cousin Guevara was a prisoner, and that, too, by command of his former confederate, he was highly exasperated, and resolved on vengeance. Hastening to Bonao, the old haunt of rebellion, he claimed the co-operation of Pedro Requelme, the recently appointed Alcalde. It was readily yielded. They went round together to the various parts of the Vega, where their late companions in rebellion had received lands and settled; working upon their ready passions, and enlisting their feelings in the cause of an old comrade. These men seem to have had an irresistible propensity to sedition. Guevara was a favourite with them all; the

charms of the Indian beauty had probably their influence; and the conduct of Roldan was pronounced a tyrannical interference, to prevent a marriage agreeable to all parties, and beneficial to the colony. There is no being so odious to his former associates, as a reformed robber, or a rebel, enlisted in the service of justice. The old scenes of faction were renewed, the weapons which had scarce been hung up from the recent rebellions, were again snatched down from the walls, and rash preparations were made for action. Moxica soon saw a body of daring and reckless men, ready, with horse and weapon, to follow him on any desperate enterprize. Blinded by the impunity which had attended their former outrages, he now threatened acts of greater atrocity, meditating, not merely the rescue of his cousin, but the death of Roldan and the admiral.

Columbus was at Fort Conception, with an inconsiderable force, when this dangerous plot was concerted in his very neighbourhood. Not dreaming of any further hostilities from men on whom he had lavished such favours, he would doubtless have fallen into their power, had not intelligence

been brought him of the plot by a deserter from the conspirators. He saw at a glance the perils by which he was surrounded, and the storm that was about to burst upon the island. It was no longer a time for lenient measures; he determined to strike a blow, which should crush the very head of rebellion.

Taking with him but six or seven trusty servants, and three esquires, all well armed, he set out in the night for the place where the ringleaders were quartered. Confiding in the secrecy of their plot, and the late passiveness of the admiral, they appear to have been perfectly unguarded. Columbus came upon them, suddenly, and by surprise; seized Moxica and several of his principal confederates, and bore them off prisoners to Fort Conception. The moment was critical; the Vega was ripe for a revolt; he had the fomentor of the conspiracy in his power, and an example was called for, that should strike terror into the factious. He ordered Moxica to be hanged on the top of the fortress. The latter entreated that he might be allowed to confess himself previous to execution. A priest was sum-

moned. The miserable Moxica, who had been so undaunted and arrogant in rebellion, lost all courage at the near approach of death. He delayed to confess, beginning and pausing, and recommencing, and again hesitating, as if he hoped, by whiling away time, to give a chance for rescue. Instead of confessing his own sins, he began to accuse others of criminality, who were known to be innocent; until Columbus, incensed at this falsehood and treachery, and losing all patience, in his mingled indignation and scorn, ordered the dastard wretch to be flung headlong from the battlements*. Several of the accomplices of Moxica were condemned to death, but reserved in confinement for the present.

This sudden act of severity was promptly followed up. Before the conspirators had time to recover from their astonishment, Pedro Requelme was taken, with several of his compeers, in his ruffian den at Bonao, and conveyed to the fortress of San Domingo; where was also confined the original mover of this second rebellion, Hernando de Guevara, the lover of the young Indian

* Herrera, decad. 1, l. iv., c. 5.

princess. These unexpected acts of rigour, proceeding from a quarter which had been long so lenient, had the desired effect. The conspirators, seized with consternation, fled for the most part to Xaragua, their old and favourite retreat. They were not suffered to congregate there again, and concert new seditions. The Adelantado, seconded by Roldan, pursued them with his characteristic rapidity of movement and vigour of arm. It has been said that he carried a priest with him, in order that, as he arrested delinquents, they might be confessed and hanged upon the spot; but the more probable account is that he transmitted them prisoners to San Domingo. He had seventeen of them at one time confined in one common dungeon, awaiting their trial, while he continued in indefatigable pursuit of the remainder*.

These were prompt and severe measures; but when we consider how long Columbus had borne with these men, how much he had ceded, and sacrificed to them, how he had been interrupted in all his great undertakings, and the welfare of the colony destroyed by their contemptible and

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind., l. i., c. 170, MS. Herrera, decad. 1, l. iv., c. 7.

seditious brawls; how they had abused his lenity, defied his authority, and at length attempted his life,—we cannot wonder that he should at last let fall the sword of justice, which he had hitherto held suspended.

The power of faction was now completely subdued; and the good effects of the various measures which Columbus had taken, since his last arrival, for the benefit of the island, began to appear. The Indians, seeing the inefficacy of resistance, submitted patiently to the yoke. Many of them gave signs of civilization, having, in some instances, adopted clothing. Christianity, also, had begun to make progress amongst them. The Spaniards now cultivated their lands diligently, assisted by the labours of the natives, and there was every appearance of settled and regular prosperity.

Columbus considered all this happy change as brought about by the especial intervention of heaven. He expresses this opinion decidedly in one of his letters, recording an instance of those visionary fancies which at times visited his imagination, when distempered by illness or anxiety. In

the preceding winter, about the festival of Christmas, when menaced with war by Indian foes, and insurrections among his people, when full of distrust of those around him, and apprehensions of disgrace at court, he had for a time sunk into utter despondency. In the midst of his gloom, when he had abandoned himself to despair, he heard, he says, a voice calling to him,—"O man of little faith! fear nothing, be not cast down. I will provide for thee. The seven years of the term of gold are not expired *, and in that and in all other things I will take care of thee." On that very day, he adds, he received intelligence of the discovery of a large tract of country rich in mines †. The imaginary promise of divine aid thus mysteriously and miraculously given, appeared to him since still more fully accomplished. The troubles and dangers which had recently surrounded him, had at length subsided, and tranquillity had suc-

* Columbus alludes here to the vow which he made on discovering the New World, and expressed in a letter to the sovereigns, that within seven years, he would furnish, from the profits of his discoveries, fifty thousand foot and five thousand horse, for the deliverance of the Holy Sepulchre, and an additional force, of like amount, within five years afterwards.

† Letter of Columbus to the Nurse of Prince Juan. Hist. del Almirante, cap. 84.

ceeded. He now anticipated the prosperous prosecution of his favourite enterprise, so long interrupted,—the exploring of the regions of Paria, and the establishment of a fishery in the Gulf of Pearls. How illusive were his hopes! At this moment those events were maturing which were about to overwhelm him with distress, strip him of his honours, and render him comparatively a wreck for the remainder of his days!

BOOK XIII.

CHAPTER I.

REPRESENTATIONS AT COURT AGAINST COLUMBUS. BOBADILLA EMPOWERED TO EXAMINE INTO HIS CONDUCT.

[1500.]

WHILE Columbus had been involved in a series of difficulties in the factious island of Hispaniola, his enemies had been but too successful in undermining his reputation in the court of Spain. The report brought by Ojeda of his anticipated disgrace was not entirely unfounded. The event was considered as near at hand, and every perfidious exertion made to accelerate it. Every vessel that returned from the New World came freighted with complaints, representing the character of Columbus and his brothers in the most odious point of view, as new men, inflated by their sudden rise from obscurity, unaccustomed to command, arrogant and insulting in their conduct towards men of birth and lofty spirit, oppressive in their rule

over the common people, and cruel in their treatment of the natives. The insidious and illiberal insinuation was continually urged, that they were foreigners, who could have no interest in the glory of Spain, or the prosperity of Spaniards; and contemptible as this plea may seem, it had a most powerful effect. It was even carried to such a length, that Columbus was accused of a design to cast off all allegiance to Spain, and to make himself sovereign of the countries he had discovered, or to yield them into the hands of some other power: a slander which, however extravagant, was calculated to startle the jealous mind of Ferdinand. It is true, that by every ship Columbus likewise sent home statements, written with all the frankness and energy of truth, setting forth the real cause and nature of the distractions of the island, and pointing out and imploring remedies, which, if properly applied, might have been efficacious. But his letters, arriving at distant intervals, made but single and transient impressions on the royal mind, which were speedily effaced by the influence of daily and active misrepresentation.

His enemies at court, having continual access

to the sovereigns, were enabled to place every thing urged against him in the strongest point of view, while they secretly neutralized the force of his vindications. They had a plausible logic which they continually used, to prove either bad management or bad faith in Columbus. There was an incessant drain upon the mother country for the support of the colony. Was this compatible with the extravagant pictures he had drawn of the wealth of the island, and its golden mountains, in which he had pretended to find the Ophir of ancient days, the source of all the riches of Solomon? They inferred that he had either deceived the sovereigns by designing exaggerations, or he had grossly wronged them by malpractices, or he was totally incapable of the duties of government.

The disappointment of Ferdinand, in finding his newly-discovered possessions a source of expense instead of profit, was known to press sorely on his mind. The wars, dictated by his ambition, had straitened his resources, and involved him in perplexities. He had looked with confidence to the New World for relief, and for ample means to pursue his triumphs; and he grew impatient at

the repeated demands which it occasioned on his scanty treasury. For the purpose of irritating his feelings and heightening his resentment, every disappointed and repining man who returned from the colony was encouraged, by the hostile faction, to put in claims for pay withheld by Columbus, or losses sustained in his service. This was especially the case with the disorderly ruffians who had been shipped off to free the island from their seditions. They found way to the court at Granada. They followed the king when he rode out, filling the air with their complaints, and clamouring for their pay. At one time, about fifty of these vagabonds found their way into the inner court of the Alhambra, under the royal apartments, holding up bunches of grapes, as the meagre diet left them by their poverty, and railing aloud at the deceits of Columbus, and the cruel neglect of government. The two sons of Columbus happening to pass by, who were pages to the queen, they followed them with imprecations, exclaiming, "There go the sons of the admiral, the whelps of him who discovered the land of vanity and delusion, the grave of Spanish hidalgos *."

* Hist. del Almirante, c. 85.

The incessant repetition of falsehood will gradually wear its way into the most candid mind. Isabella herself began to entertain doubts respecting the conduct of Columbus. Where there was such universal and incessant complaint, it seemed reasonable to conclude that there must exist some fault. If Columbus and his brothers were upright, they might be injudicious; and, in government, mischief is oftener produced through error of judgment, than iniquity of design. The letters written by Columbus himself presented a lamentable picture of the confusion of the island. Might not this arise from the weakness and incapacity of the rulers? Even granting that the prevalent abuses arose in a great measure from the enmity of the people to the admiral and his brothers, and their prejudices against them as foreigners, was it safe to intrust so important and distant a command to persons who were so unpopular with the community?

These considerations had much weight in the candid mind of Isabella, but they were all-powerful with the cautious and jealous Ferdinand. He had never regarded Columbus with real cordiality;

and ever since he had ascertained the importance of his discoveries, had regretted the extensive powers he had vested in his hands. The excessive clamours which had arisen during the brief administration of the Adelantado, and the breaking out of the faction of Roldan, at length determined the king to send out some person of consequence and ability, to investigate the affairs of the colony, and, if necessary for its safety, to take upon himself the command. This important and critical measure it appears had been decided upon, and the papers and powers actually drawn out, in the spring of 1499. It was not, however, carried into effect until the following year. Various reasons have been assigned for this delay. The important services rendered by Columbus in the discovery of Paria and the Pearl Islands, may have had some effect on the royal mind. The necessity of fitting out an armament just at that moment, to co-operate with the Venetians against the Turks; the menacing movements of the new king of France, Louis XII.; the rebellion of the Moors of the Alpuxarra in the lately conquered kingdom of Granada; all these have been alleged

as reasons for postponing a measure which called for much consideration, and might have important effects upon the newly discovered possessions *. The most probable reason, however, was the strong disinclination of Isabella to take so harsh a step against a man for whom she entertained such ardent gratitude and high admiration. At length the arrival of the ships with the late followers of Roldan, according to their capitulation, brought matters to a crisis. It is true, that Ballester and Barrantes came in these ships, to place the affairs of the island in a proper light; but they brought out a host of witnesses in favour of Roldan, and letters written by himself and his confederates, attributing all their late conduct to the tyranny of Columbus and his brothers. Unfortunately, the testimony of the rebels had the greatest weight with Ferdinand; and there was a circumstance in the case which suspended for a time the friendship of Isabella, which had hitherto been the greatest dependance of Columbus.

The queen having taken a maternal interest in the welfare of the natives, had been repeatedly

* Muñoz, Hist. N. Mundo, part unpublished.

offended by what appeared to her pertinacity on the part of Columbus, in continuing to make slaves of those taken in warfare, in contradiction to her known wishes. The same ships which brought home the companions of Roldan, brought likewise a great number of slaves. Some, Columbus had been obliged to grant to these men by the articles of capitulation; others they had brought away clandestinely. Among them were several daughters of caciques, who had been seduced away from their families and their native island by these profligates. Some of these were in a state of pregnancy, others had new-born infants. The gifts and transfers of these unhappy beings were all ascribed to the will of Columbus, and represented to Isabella in the darkest colours. Her sensibility as a woman, and her dignity as a queen, were instantly in arms. "What power," exclaimed she indignantly, "has the admiral to give away my vassals*?" She determined, by one decided and peremptory act, to shew her abhorrence of these outrages upon humanity; she ordered all the Indians to be restored to their

* Las Casas, l. i.

country and friends. Nay more, her measure was retrospective. She commanded that those which had formerly been sent home by the admiral, should be sought out, and sent back to Hispaniola. Unfortunately for Columbus, at this very juncture, in one of his letters, he had advised the continuance of Indian slavery for some time longer, as a measure important for the welfare of the colony. This contributed to heighten the indignation of Isabella, and induced her no longer to oppose the sending out of a commission to investigate his conduct, and, if necessary, to supersede him in command.

Ferdinand had been exceedingly embarrassed in appointing this commission, between his sense of what was due to the character and service of Columbus, and his anxiety to retract with delicacy the powers which he had vested in him. A pretext at length was furnished by the recent letters of the admiral, and he seized upon it with avidity. Columbus had repeatedly requested that a person might be sent out, of talents and probity, learned in the law, to act as chief judge, but whose powers should be so limited and defined as not to interfere with his own authority as viceroy. He had also

requested that an impartial umpire might be appointed, to decide in the affair between himself and Roldan. Ferdinand proposed to consult his wishes, but to unite those two offices in one; and as the person he appointed would have to decide in matters touching the highest functions of the admiral and his brothers, he was empowered, should he find them culpable, to supersede them in the government,—a singular mode of ensuring partiality.

The person chosen for this most momentous and delicate office was Don Francisco de Bobadilla, an officer of the royal household, and a commander of the military and religious order of Catalonia. Oviedo pronounces him a very honest and religious man*; but he is represented by others, and his actions corroborate the description, as needy, passionate, and ambitious,—three powerful objections to his exercising the rights of judicature in a case requiring the utmost patience, candour, and circumspection, and where the judge was to derive wealth and power from the conviction of one of the parties.

The authority vested in Bobadilla is defined in

* Oviedo, Cronica, l. iii., c. 6.

letters from the sovereigns still extant, and which deserve to be noticed chronologically; for the royal intentions appear to have varied with times and circumstances. The first was dated on the 21st of March, 1499, and mentions the complaint of the admiral, that an alcalde, and certain other persons, had risen in rebellion against him. "Wherefore," adds the letter, "we order you to inform yourself of the truth of the foregoing; to ascertain who and what persons they were who rose against the said admiral and our magistracy, and for what cause; and what robberies and other injuries they have committed; and furthermore, to extend your inquiries to all other matters relating to the premises; and the information obtained, and the truth known, whomever you find culpable, *arrest their persons, and sequestrate their effects*; and thus taken, proceed against them and the absent, both civilly and criminally, and impose and inflict such fines and punishments as you may think fit." To carry this into effect, Bobadilla was authorized, in case of necessity, to call in the assistance of the admiral, and of all other persons in authority.

The powers here given are manifestly directed merely against the rebels, and in consequence

of the complaints of Columbus. Another letter, dated on the 21st of May, two months subsequently, is quite of different purport. It makes no mention of Columbus, but is addressed to the councillors, justices, regidores, cavaliers, esquires, officers, and men of property of the islands and Terra firma, informing them of the appointment of Bobadilla to the government, with full civil and criminal jurisdiction. Among the powers specified, is the following:—"It is our will, that if the said commander, Francisco de Bobadilla, should think it necessary for our service, and the purposes of justice, that any cavaliers, or other persons who are at present in those islands, or may arrive there, should leave them, and not return and reside in them, and that they should come and present themselves before us, he may command it in our name, and oblige them to depart; and whomever he thus commands, we hereby order, that immediately, without waiting to inquire or consult us, or to receive from us any other letter or command, and without interposing appeal or supplication, they obey whatever he shall say and order, under the penalties which he shall impose on our part, &c. &c."

Another letter, dated likewise on the 21st of May, in which Columbus is styled simply "admiral of the ocean sea," orders him and his brothers to surrender the fortress, ships, houses, arms, ammunition, cattle, and all other royal property, into the hands of Bobadilla, as governor, under penalty of incurring the punishments to which those subject themselves who refuse to surrender fortresses and other trusts, when commanded by their sovereigns.

A fourth letter, dated on the 26th of May, and addressed to Columbus, simply by the title of admiral, is a mere letter of credence, ordering him to give faith and obedience to whatever Bobadilla should impart.

The second and third of these letters were evidently provisional, and only to be produced, if, on examination, there should appear such delinquency on the part of Columbus and his brothers as to warrant their being divested of command.

This heavy blow, as has been shewn, remained suspended for a year; yet, that it was whispered about, and triumphantly anticipated by the enemies of Columbus, is evident from the assertions

of Ojeda, who sailed from Spain about the time of the signature of those letters, and had intimate communications with Bishop Fonseca, who was considered instrumental in producing this measure. The very license granted by the bishop to Ojeda to sail on a voyage of discovery in contravention of the prerogatives of the admiral, has the air of being given on a presumption of his speedy downfall; and the same presumption, as has already been observed, must have encouraged Ojeda in his turbulent conduct at Xaragua.

At length the long-projected measure was carried into effect. Bobadilla set sail for St. Domingo about the middle of July 1500, with two caravels, in which were twenty-five men as a kind of guard, who were enlisted to serve for a year. There were six friars likewise, who had charge of a number of Indians sent back to their country. Besides the letters patent, Bobadilla was authorized, by a royal order, to ascertain all arrears of pay due to persons in the service of the crown, and to discharge them; and to oblige the admiral to pay what was due on his part, "so that those people might receive what was owing to them, and there

might be no more complaints." In addition to all these powers, Bobadilla was furnished with many blank letters signed by the sovereigns, to be filled up by him in such manner, and directed to such persons, as he might think advisable in relation to the mission with which he was intrusted *.

* Herrera, decad. 1, l. iv., c. 7.

CHAPTER II.

ARRIVAL OF BOBADILLA AT ST. DOMINGO. HIS VIOLENT ASSUMPTION OF THE COMMAND.

[1500.]

Columbus was still at Fort Conception, regulating the affairs of the Vega, after the catastrophe of the sedition of Moxica; his brother the adelantado, accompanied by Roldan, was pursuing and arresting the fugitive rebels in Xaragua; and Don Diego Columbus remained in temporary command at St. Domingo. Faction had worn itself out; the insurgents had brought down ruin upon themselves; and the island appeared delivered from the domination of violent and lawless men.

Such was the state of public affairs, when, on the morning of the 23rd of August, two caravels were descried off the harbour of St. Domingo, about a league at sea. They were standing off and on, waiting until the sea breeze, which generally prevails about ten o'clock, should carry them into port. Don Diego Columbus supposed

them to be ships sent from Spain with supplies, and hoped to find on board his nephew Diego, whom the admiral had requested might be sent out to assist him in his various concerns. A canoe was immediately despatched to obtain information; which, approaching the caravels, inquired what news they brought, and whether Diego, the son of the admiral, was on board. Bobadilla himself replied from the principal vessel, announcing himself as a commissioner sent out to investigate the late rebellion. The master of the caravel then inquired about the news of the island, and was informed of the recent transactions. Seven of the rebels, he was told, had been hanged that week, and five more were in the fortress of St. Domingo, condemned to suffer the same fate. Among these were Pedro Requelme and Fernando de Guevara, the young cavalier whose passion for the daughter of Anacaona had been the original cause of the rebellion. Further conversation passed, in the course of which Bobadilla ascertained that the admiral and the adelantado were absent, and Don Diego Columbus in command. When the canoe re-

turned to the city, and it was known that a commissioner had arrived to make inquisition into the late troubles, there was a great stir and agitation throughout the community. Knots of whisperers gathered in every direction: those who were conscious of mal-practices were filled with consternation; while those who had grievances, real or imaginary, to complain of, especially those whose pay was in arrear, appeared with joyful countenances*.

As the vessels entered the river, Bobadilla beheld on either bank a gibbet with the body of a Spaniard hanging on it, apparently but lately executed. He considered these as conclusive proofs of the alleged cruelty of Columbus. Many boats came off to the ship, every one being anxious to pay early court to this public censor. Bobadilla remained on board all day, in the course of which he collected much of the rumours of the place; and as those who sought to secure his favour, were those who had most to fear from his investigations, it is evident that the nature of the

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind., l., c. 169. Herrera, Hist. Ind., decad. 1, l. iv., c. 8.

rumours must generally have been unfavourable to Columbus. In fact, before Bobadilla landed, if not before he had arrived, the culpability of the admiral was decided in his mind. The next morning he landed with all his followers, and went to the church to attend mass, where he found Don Diego Columbus, Rodrigo Perez, the lieutenant of the admiral, and other persons of note. Mass being ended, and those persons, with a multitude of the populace, being assembled at the door of the church, Bobadilla ordered his letters-patent to be read, authorizing him to investigate the rebellion, to seize the persons, and sequestrate the property of delinquents, and to proceed against them with the utmost rigour of the law; commanding also the admiral, and all others in authority, to assist him in the discharge of his duties. The letter being read, he demanded of Don Diego and the alcaldes, to surrender to him the persons of Fernando Guevara, Pedro Requelme, and the other prisoners, with the depositions that had been taken concerning them; and ordered that the parties by whom they were accused, and those by whose

command they had been taken, should appear before him.

Don Diego replied, that the proceedings had emanated from the orders of the admiral, who held superior powers to any that Bobadilla could possess, and without whose authority he could do nothing. He requested, at the same time, a copy of the letter patent, that he might send it to his brother, to whom alone the matter appertained. This Bobadilla refused, observing that, if Don Diego had power to do nothing, it was useless to give him a copy. He added, that since the office and authority he had proclaimed appeared to have no weight, he would try what power and consequence there was in the name of governor; and would show them that he had command, not merely over them, but over the admiral himself.

The little community remained in breathless suspense, awaiting the portentous movements of Bobadilla. The next morning he appeared at mass, resolved on assuming those powers which were only to have been produced after full investigation, and ample proof of the mal-conduct of

Columbus. When mass was over, and the eager populace had gathered round the door of the church, Bobadilla, in presence of Don Diego and Rodrigo Perez, ordered his other royal patent to be read, investing him with the government of the islands, and of terra firma.

The patent being read, Bobadilla took the customary oath, and then claimed the obedience of Don Diego, Rodrigo Perez, and all present, to this royal instrument; on the authority of which he again demanded the prisoners confined in the fortress. In reply, they professed the utmost deference to the letter of their majesties, but again observed that they held the prisoners in obedience to the admiral, to whom the sovereigns had granted letters of a higher nature.

The self-importance of Bobadilla was incensed at this non-compliance, especially as he saw it had some effect upon the populace, who appeared to doubt his authority. He now produced the third mandate of the crown, ordering Columbus and his brothers to deliver up all fortresses, ships, and other royal property. To win the public completely to his side, he read also the additional

mandate issued on the 30th of May, of the same year, ordering him to pay the arrears of wages due to all persons in the royal service, and to compel the admiral to pay the arrears of those to whom he was accountable.

This last document was received with shouts by the multitude, many having long arrears due to them in consequence of the poverty of the treasury. Flushed with his growing importance, Bobadilla again demanded the prisoners; threatening, if refused, to take them by force. Meeting with the same reply, he repaired to the fortress to execute his threats. This post was commanded by Miguel Diaz, the same Arragonian cavalier who had once taken refuge among the Indians on the banks of the Ozema, won the affections of the female cacique Catalina, received from her information of the neighbouring gold mines, and had induced his countrymen to remove to those parts.

When Bobadilla came before the fortress, he found the gates closed, and the alcalde, Miguel Diaz, upon the battlements. He ordered his letters-patent to be read with a loud voice, the signatures and seals to be held up to view, and

then demanded the surrender of the prisoners. Diaz requested a copy of the letters; but this Bobadilla refused, alleging that there was no time for delay, the prisoners being under sentence of death, and liable at any moment to be executed. He threatened at the same time, that if they were not given up, he would proceed to extremities, and Diaz should be answerable for the consequences. The wary alcalde again required time to reply, and a copy of the letters; saying that he held the fortress for the king, by the command of the admiral, his lord, who had gained these territories and islands, and that when the latter arrived, he should obey his orders*.

The whole spirit of Bobadilla was roused within him, at the refusal of the alcalde. Assembling all the people he had brought from Spain, together with the sailors of the ships, and the rabble of the place, he exhorted them to aid him in getting possession of the prisoners, but to harm no one unless in case of resistance. The mob shouted assent, for Bobadilla was already the idol of the multitude. About the hour of vespers, he

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind., l. i., c. 179.

set out at the head of this motley army, to storm a fortress destitute of a garrison, and formidable only in name, being calculated to withstand only a naked and slightly-armed people. The accounts of this transaction have something in them bordering on the ludicrous, and give it the air of an absurd rhodomontade. Bobadilla assailed the portal with great impetuosity, the frail bolts and locks of which gave way at the first shock, and allowed him easy admission. In the mean time, however, his zealous myrmidons applied ladders to the walls, as if about to carry the place by assault, and to experience a desperate defence. The alcalde, Miguel Diaz, and Don Diego de Alverado, alone appeared on the battlements; they had drawn swords, but offered no resistance. Bobadilla entered the fortress in triumph, and without molestation. The prisoners were found in a chamber in irons. He ordered that they should be brought up to him to the top of the fortress, where, having put a few questions to them, as a matter of form, he gave them in charge to an alguazil named Juan de Espinosa*.

* Las Casas, ubi sup. Herrera, ubi sup.

Such was the arrogant and precipitate entrance into office of Francisco de Bobadilla. He had reversed the order of his written instructions; having seized upon the government before he had investigated the conduct of Columbus. He continued his career in the same spirit; acting as if the case had been prejudged in Spain, and he had been sent out merely to degrade the admiral from his employments, not to ascertain the manner in which he had fulfilled them. He took up his residence in the house of Columbus, seized upon his arms, gold, plate, jewels, horses, his books, letters, and other writings, both public and private, even to his most secret papers. He gave no account of the property thus seized; and which he no doubt considered already confiscated to the crown, excepting that he paid out of it the wages of those to whom the admiral was in arrears *. To increase his favour with the people, he proclaimed, on the second day of his assumption of power, a general license for the term of twenty years, to seek for gold, paying merely one eleventh to government, instead of a third as here-

* Hist. del Almirante, c. 85. Las Casas. Herrera, ubi sup.

tofore. At the same time, he spoke in the most disrespectful and unqualified terms of Columbus, saying that he was empowered to send him home in chains, and that neither he nor any of his lineage would ever again be permitted to govern in the island *.

* Letter of Columbus to the Nurse of Prince Juan.

CHAPTER III.

COLUMBUS SUMMONED TO APPEAR BEFORE BOBADILLA.

[1500.]

When the tidings reached Columbus at Fort Conception of the high-handed proceedings of Bobadilla, he considered them the unauthorized acts of some rash adventurer like Ojeda. Since government had apparently thrown open the door to private enterprise, he might expect to have his path continually crossed, and his jurisdiction infringed by bold intermeddlers, feigning or fancying themselves authorized to interfere in the affairs of the colony. Since the departure of Ojeda another squadron had touched upon the coast, and produced a transient alarm, being an expedition under one of the Pinzons, licensed by the sovereigns to make discoveries. There had also been a rumour of another squadron hovering about the island, which proved, however, to be unfounded*;

* Letter of Columbus to the Nurse of Prince Juan.

The conduct of Bobadilla bore all the appearance of a lawless usurpation of some intruder of the kind. He had possessed himself forcibly of the fortress, and consequently of the town. He had issued extravagant licenses injurious to the government, and apparently intended only to make partisans among the people; and he had threatened to throw Columbus himself in irons. That this man could really be sanctioned by government, in such intemperate measures, was repugnant to belief. The admiral's consciousness of his own services, the repeated assurances of high consideration on the part of the sovereigns, and the prerogatives granted to him under their hand and seal, with all the solemnity that a compact could possess, all forbade him to consider the transactions at St. Domingo otherwise than as outrages on his authority by some daring or misguided individual.

To be nearer to St. Domingo, and obtain more correct information, he proceeded to Bonao, which was now beginning to assume the appearance of a settlement, several Spaniards having erected houses there, and cultivated the adjacent

country. He had scarcely reached Bonao, when an alcalde, bearing a staff of office, arrived there from San Domingo, proclaiming the appointment of Bobadilla to the government, and bearing copies of his letter-patent. There was no especial letter or message sent to the admiral, nor were any of the common forms of courtesy and ceremony observed in superseding him in the command: all the proceedings of Bobadilla towards him were abrupt and insulting.

Columbus was exceedingly embarrassed how to act. It was evident that Bobadilla was intrusted with extensive powers by the sovereigns, but that they could have exercised such a sudden, unmerited, and apparently capricious act of severity towards him, as that of divesting him of all his commands, he could not believe. He endeavoured to persuade himself that Bobadilla was some person sent out to exercise the functions of chief judge, according to the request he had written home to the sovereigns, and that they had intrusted him likewise with provisional powers to make an inquest into the late troubles of the island. All beyond these powers he tried to believe were mere

assumptions and exaggerations of authority, as in the case of Aguado. At all events he was determined to act upon such presumption, and to endeavour to gain time. If the monarchs had really taken any harsh measures with respect to him, it must have been in consequence of misrepresentations. The least delay might give them an opportunity of ascertaining their error, and making the necessary amends.

He wrote to Bobadilla, therefore, in guarded terms, welcoming him to the island, cautioning him against precipitate measures, especially in granting licenses to collect gold, informing him that he was on the point of going to Spain, and in a little time would leave him in command, with every thing fully and clearly explained. He wrote at the same time to the like purport to certain monks who had come out with Bobadilla, though he observes that these letters were only written to gain time*. He received no replies: but while an insulting silence was observed towards him, Bobadilla filled up several of the blank letters, of which he had a number signed by

* Letter of Columbus to the Nurse of Prince Juan.

the sovereigns, and sent them to Roldan, and other of the admiral's enemies, the very men whom he had been sent out to judge. These letters were full of civilities and promises of favour *.

To prevent any mischief which might arise from the licenses and indulgences so prodigally granted by Bobadilla, Columbus published by word and letter, that the powers assumed by him could not be valid, nor his licenses availing, as he himself held superior powers granted to him in perpetuity by the crown, which could no more be superseded in this instance, than they had been in that of Aguado.

For some time Columbus remained in this anxious and perplexed state of mind, uncertain what line of conduct to pursue in so singular and unlooked-for a conjuncture. He was soon brought to a decision. Francisco Velasquez, deputy treasurer, and Juan de Trasierra, a Franciscan friar, arrived at Bonao, and delivered to him the royal letter of credence, signed by the sovereigns on the 26th of May, 1499, in which they commanded him

* Letter of Columbus to the Nurse of Prince Juan. Herrera, decad. 1, l. iv., c. 9.

to give implicit faith and obedience to Bobadilla, and they delivered to him, at the same time, a summons from the latter to appear immediately before him.

This laconic letter from the sovereigns struck at once at the root of all his dignity and power. He no longer made hesitation or demur, but complying with the peremptory summons of Bobadilla, departed almost alone, and unattended, for San Domingo*.

* Herrera, decad. 1, l. iv. c. 9. Letter to the Nurse of Prince Juan.

CHAPTER IV.

COLUMBUS AND HIS BROTHERS ARRESTED AND SENT TO SPAIN IN CHAINS.

[1500.]

THE tidings that a new governor had arrived, and that Columbus was in disgrace, and was to be sent home in chains, circulated rapidly through the Vega, and the colonists hastened from all parts to San Domingo to make interest with Bobadilla. It was soon perceived that there was no surer way than that of vilifying his predecessor. Bobadilla felt that he had taken a rash step in seizing upon the government, and that his own safety required the conviction of Columbus. He listened eagerly, therefore, to all accusations, public or private; and welcome was he who could bring any charge, however extravagant, against the admiral and his brothers.

Hearing that the admiral was on his way to the city, he made a bustle of preparation, and armed the troops, affecting to believe a rumour, that Columbus had called upon the caciques of the

Vega to aid him with their subjects in a resistance to the commands of government. No grounds appear for this absurd report, which was probably invented to give a colouring of precaution to subsequent measures of violence and insult. The admiral's brother, Don Diego, was seized, thrown in irons, and confined on board of a caravel, without any reason being assigned for his imprisonment.

In the mean time Columbus pursued his journey to San Domingo, travelling in a lonely manner, without guards, or retinue. Most of his people were with the adelantado, and he had declined being attended by the remainder. He had heard of the rumours of the hostile intentions of Bobadilla; and although he knew that violence was threatened to his person, he came in this unpretending manner, to manifest his pacific feelings, and to remove all suspicion *.

No sooner did Bobadilla hear of his arrival, than he gave orders to put him in irons, and confine him in the fortress. This outrage to a person of such dignified and venerable appearance, and

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind., l. i, c. 180.

such eminent merit, seemed, for the time, to shock even his enemies. When the irons were brought, every one present shrunk from the task of putting them on him, either from a sentiment of compassion at so great a reverse of fortune, or out of habitual reverence for his person. To fill the measure of ingratitude meted out to him, it was one of his own domestics, "a graceless and shameless cook," says Las Casas, "who rivetted the fetters with as much readiness and alacrity, as though he were serving him with choice and savoury viands. I knew the fellow," adds the venerable historian, "and I think his name was Espinosa *."

Columbus conducted himself with characteristic magnanimity under the injuries heaped upon him. There is a noble scorn which swells and supports the heart, and silences the tongue of the truly great, when enduring the insults of the unworthy. Columbus could not stoop to deprecate the arrogance of a weak and violent man like Bobadilla. He looked beyond this shallow agent, and all his petty tyranny, to the sovereigns who had employed him. It was their injustice and ingratitude alone

* Las Casas, l. i., c. 180.

that could wound his spirit; and he felt assured that when the truth came to be known, they would blush to find how greatly they had wronged him. With this proud assurance, he bore all present indignities in silence.

Bobadilla, although he had the admiral and Don Diego in his power, and had secured the venal populace, yet felt insecure and anxious. The adelantado, with an armed force under his command, was still in the distant province of Xaragua, in pursuit of the rebels. Knowing his soldier-like and determined spirit, he feared he might take some violent measure when he should hear of the ignominious treatment and imprisonment of his brothers. He doubted whether any order from himself would have any effect, except to exasperate the stern Don Bartholomew. He sent a demand, therefore, to Columbus, to write to his brother, requesting him to repair peaceably to San Domingo, and forbidding him to execute the persons he held in confinement: Columbus readily complied. He exhorted his brother to submit quietly to the authority of his sovereigns, and to endure all present wrongs and indignities, under the confidence that

when they arrived at Castile, every thing would be explained and redressed *.

On receiving this letter, Don Bartholemew immediately complied. Relinquishing his command, he hastened peacefully to St. Domingo, and on arriving experienced the same treatment with his brothers, being put in irons and confined on board of a caravel. They were kept separate from each other, and no communication permitted between them. Bobadilla did not see them himself, nor did he allow others to visit them; but kept them in ignorance of the cause of their imprisonment, the crimes with which they were charged, and the process that was going on against them †.

* Peter Martyr mentions as a vulgar rumour of the day, that the admiral, not knowing what might happen, wrote a letter in cipher to the adelantado, urging him to come with arms in his hands, to prevent any violence that might be contrived against him; that the adelantado advanced, in effect, with his armed force, but having the imprudence to proceed some distance a head of it, was surprised by the governor, before his men could come to his succour, and that the letter in cipher had been sent to Spain. This must have been one of the groundless rumours of the day, circulated to prejudice the public mind. Nothing of the kind appears among the charges in the inquest made by Bobadilla, and which was seen, and extracts made from it, by Las Casas, for his history. It is, in fact, in total contradiction to the statements of Las Casas, Herrera, and Fernando Columbus.

† Charlevoix, in his History of San Domingo (lib. iii. p. 199) states, that the suit against Columbus was conducted in writing; that written charges

It has been questioned whether Bobadilla really had authority for the arrest and imprisonment of the admiral and his brothers*; and whether such violence and indignity was in any case contemplated by the sovereigns. He may have fancied himself empowered to do so by the clause in the letter of instructions, dated March 21st, 1499, in which, speaking of the rebellion of Roldan, "he is authorized to *seize the persons, and sequestrate the property* of those who appeared to be culpable, and then to proceed against them and against the absent, with the highest civil and criminal penalties." This evidently had reference to the persons of Roldan and his followers, who were then in arms, and against whom Columbus had sent home complaints; and this, by a violent construction, Bobadilla seems to have wrested into an

were sent to him, to which he replied in the same way. This is contrary to the statements of Las Casas, Herrera, and Fernando Columbus. The admiral himself, in his letter to the Nurse of Prince Juan, after relating the manner in which he and his brothers had been thrown into irons, and confined separately, without being visited by Bobadilla, or permitted to see any other persons, expressly adds, "I make oath that I do not know for what I am imprisoned." Again, in a letter written some time afterwards from Jamaica, he says, "I was taken and thrown with two of my brothers in a ship, loaded with irons, with little clothing and much ill treatment, without being summoned or convicted by justice."

* Herrera, decad. 1, l. iv., c. 10. Oviedo, Cronica, l. iii., c. 6.

authority for seizing the person of the admiral himself. In fact, in the whole course of his proceedings, he had reversed and confounded the order of his instructions. His first step should have been to proceed against the rebels; this he made the last. His last step should have been, in case of ample evidence against the admiral, to have superseded him in office; and this he made the first, without waiting for evidence. Having predetermined, from the very outset, that Columbus was in the wrong, by the same rule, he had to presume that all the opposite parties were in the right. It became indispensable to his own justification to inculpate the admiral and his brothers; and the rebels he had been sent to judge became, by this singular perversion of rule, necessary and cherished evidences, to criminate those against whom they had rebelled.

The intentions of the crown, however, are not to be vindicated at the expense of its miserable agent. If proper respect had been felt for the rights and dignities of Columbus, Bobadilla would never have been intrusted with powers so extensive, undefined, and discretionary; nor would he

have dared to proceed to such lengths, with such rudeness and precipitation, had he not felt assured that it would not be displeasing to the jealous-minded Ferdinand.

The old scenes of the time of Aguado were now renewed with tenfold virulence, and the old charges revived, with others still more extravagant. From the early and never-to-be-forgotten outrage upon Castilian pride, of compelling hidalgos, in time of emergency, to labour in the construction of works necessary to the public safety, down to the recent charge of levying war against the government, there was not a hardship, abuse, or sedition in the island, that was not imputed to the misdeeds of Columbus and his brothers. Besides the usual accusations of inflicting oppressive labour, unnecessary tasks, painful restrictions, short allowances of food and cruel punishments upon the Spaniards, and waging unjust wars against the natives, they were now charged with preventing the conversion of the latter, that they might send them slaves to Spain, and profit by their sale. This last charge, so contrary to the pious feelings of the admiral, was founded

on his having objected to the baptism of certain Indians of mature age, until they could be instructed in the doctrines of Christianity; justly considering it an abuse of that holy sacrament to administer it thus blindly *.

Columbus was charged, also, with having secreted pearls, and other precious articles, collected in his voyage along the coast of Paria, and of keeping the sovereigns in ignorance of the nature of his discoveries there, in order to exact new privileges from them. Yet it was notorious that he had sent home specimens of the pearls, and journals and charts of his voyage, by which others had been enabled to pursue his track.

Even the late tumults, now that the rebels were admitted as evidence, were all turned into matters of accusation. They were represented as spirited and loyal resistances to tyranny exercised upon the colonists and the natives. The well-merited punishments inflicted upon certain of the ringleaders, were cited as proofs of a cruel and revengeful disposition, and a secret hatred of Spaniards. Bobadilla believed, or affected to

* Muñoz, Hist. N. Mundo, part unpublished.

believe, all these charges. He had, in a manner, made the rebels his confederates in the ruin of Columbus. It was become a common cause with them. He could no longer, therefore, conduct himself towards them as a judge. Guevara, Requelme, and their fellow convicts, were discharged almost without the form of a trial, and it is even said were received into favour and countenance. Roldan, from the very first, had been treated with confidence by Bobadilla, and honoured with his correspondence. All the others whose conduct had rendered them liable to justice, received either a special acquittal or a general pardon. It was enough to have been opposed in any way to Columbus, to obtain full justification in the eyes of Bobadilla.

The latter had now collected a weight of testimony, and produced a crowd of witnesses, sufficient, as he conceived, to ensure the condemnation of the prisoners, and his own coutinnance in command. He determined, therefore, to send the admiral and his brothers home in chains, in the vessels which were ready for sea, transmitting at the same time the inquest taken in their case, and

writing private letters, enforcing the charges made against them, and advising that Columbus should on no account be restored to the command, which he had so shamefully abused.

San Domingo now swarmed with miscreants just delivered from the dungeon and the gibbet. It was a perfect jubilee of triumphant villany and dastard malice. Every base spirit, which had been awed into obsequiousness by Columbus and his brothers when in power, now started up to revenge itself upon them when in chains. The most injurious slanders were loudly proclaimed in the streets, insulting pasquinades and inflammatory libels were posted up at every corner, and horns were blown in the neighbourhood of their prisons, to taunt them with the exultings of the rabble. When these rejoicings of his enemies reached him in the dungeon in which he was confined, and Columbus reflected on the inconsiderate violence already exhibited by Bobadilla, he knew not how far his rashness and confidence might carry him, and began to entertain apprehensions for his life. The vessels being ready to make sail, Alonzo de Villego was appointed to take

charge of the prisoners, and carry them to Spain. He was an officer who had been brought up by an uncle of Fonseca, was in the employ of that bishop, and had come out with Bobadilla. The latter instructed him, on arriving at Cadiz, to deliver his prisoners into the hands of Fonseca, or of his uncle, thinking thereby to give the malignant prelate a triumphant justification. This circumstance gave weight with many to an assertion which had been made, that Bobadilla was secretly instigated and encouraged to his violent measures by Fonseca, and was promised his protection and influence at court, in case of any complaints of his conduct.

Villego undertook the office assigned him, but he discharged it in a more generous manner than was intended. "This Alonzo de Villego," says the worthy Las Casas, "was a hidalgo of honourable character, and my particular friend." He certainly shewed himself superior to the low malignity of his patrons. When he arrived with a guard to conduct the admiral from the prison to the ship, he found him in chains in a state of silent despondency. So violently had he been

treated, and so savage were the passions let loose against him, that he feared he should be sacrificed without an opportunity of being heard, and his name go down sullied and dishonoured to posterity. When he beheld the officer enter with the guard, he thought it was to conduct him to the scaffold. "Villejo," said he mournfully, "whither are you taking me?" "To the ship, your Excellency, to embark," replied the other; "To embark!" repeated the admiral earnestly; "Villejo! do you speak the truth?" "By the life of your Excellency," replied the honest officer, "it is true!" With these words the admiral was comforted, and felt as one restored from death to life. Nothing can be more touching and expressive than this little colloquy, recorded by the venerable Las Casas, who doubtless had it from the lips of his friend Villejo.

The caravels set sail early in October, bearing off Columbus shackled like the vilest of culprits, amidst the scoffs and shouts of a miscreant rabble, who took a brutal joy in heaping insults on his venerable head, and sent curses after him from the shores of the island he had so recently added

to the civilized world. Fortunately the voyage was favourable, and of but moderate duration, and was rendered less disagreeable by the conduct of those to whom he was given in custody. The worthy Villejo, though in the service of Fonseca, felt deeply moved at the unworthy treatment of Columbus. The master of the caravel, Andreas Martin, was equally grieved: they both treated the admiral with profound respect and assiduous attention. They would have taken off his irons, but to this he would not consent. "No," said he proudly, "their majesties commanded me by letter to submit to whatever Bobadilla should order in their name; by their authority he has put upon me these chains, I will wear them until they shall order them to be taken off, and I will preserve them afterwards as relics and memorials of the reward of my services *."

"He did so," adds his son Fernando; "I saw them always hanging in his cabinet, and he requested that when he died they might be buried with him †!"

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind., l. i., c. 180. MS.

† Hist. del Almirante, cap. 86.

BOOK XIV.

CHAPTER I.

SENSATION IN SPAIN ON THE ARRIVAL OF COLUMBUS IN IRONS. HIS APPEARANCE AT COURT.

[1500.]

THE arrival of Columbus at Cadiz, a prisoner and in chains, produced almost as great a sensation as his triumphant return from his first voyage. It was one of those striking and obvious facts, which speak to the feelings of the multitude, and preclude the necessity of reflection. No one stopped to inquire into the case. It was sufficient to be told that Columbus was brought home in irons from the world he had discovered. A general burst of indignation arose in Cadiz, and in the powerful and opulent Seville, which was immediately echoed throughout all Spain. If the ruin of Columbus had been the intention of his enemies, they had defeated their object by their

own violence. One of those reactions so frequent in the public mind, when persecution is pushed to an unguarded length, was immediately manifested. Those of the populace who had recently been loud in their clamour against Columbus, were now as loud in their reprobation of his treatment, and a strong sympathy was expressed, against which it would have been odious for the government to contend.

The tidings of his arrival, and of the ignominious manner in which he had been brought, reached the court at Granada, and filled the halls of the Alhambra with murmurs of astonishment. Columbus, full of his wrongs, but ignorant how far they had been authorized by the sovereigns, had forborne to write to them. In the course of his voyage, however, he had penned a long letter to Doña Juana de la Torre, a lady of the court, high in favour with Queen Isabella, who had been nurse to Prince Juan. This letter, on his arrival at Cadiz, Andreas Martin, the captain of the caravel, had permitted Columbus to send off privately by express. It arrived, therefore, before the protocol of the proceedings instituted by Bo-

badilla was received. It was from this document that the sovereigns derived their first intimation of his treatment*. It contained a statement of the late transactions of the island, and of the wrongs he had suffered, written with his usual artlessness and energy. To specify the contents, would be but to recapitulate events already recorded. Some expressions, however, which burst from him in the warmth of his feelings, are worthy of being noted. "The slanders of worthless men," says he, "have done me more injury than all my services have profited me." Speaking of the misrepresentations to which he was subjected, he observes, "Such is the evil name which I have acquired, that if I were to build hospitals and churches, they would be called dens of robbers." After relating in indignant terms the conduct of Bobadilla, in seeking testimony respecting his administration from the very men who had rebelled against him, and throwing himself and his brothers in irons, without letting them know the offences with which they were charged, "I have been much aggrieved," he adds, "in that a

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind. l. i., c. 182.

person should be sent out to investigate my conduct, who knew that if the evidence which he could send home should appear to be of a serious nature, he would remain in the government." He complains that, in forming an opinion of his administration, allowances had not been made for the extraordinary difficulties with which he had to contend, and the wild state of the country over which he had to rule. "I was judged," he observes, "as a governor who had been sent to take charge of a well-regulated city, under the dominion of well-established laws, where there was no danger of every thing running to disorder and ruin; but I ought to be judged as a captain, sent to subdue a numerous and hostile people, of manners and religion opposite to ours, living not in regular towns, but in forests and mountains. It ought to be considered, that I have brought all these under subjection to their majesties, giving them dominion over another world, by which Spain, heretofore poor, has suddenly become rich. Whatever errors I may have fallen into, they were not with an evil intention; and I believe their majesties will credit what I say. I have known

them to be merciful to those who have wilfully done them disservice; I am convinced that they will have still more indulgence for me, who have erred innocently, or by compulsion, as they will hereafter be more fully informed; and I trust they will consider my great services, the advantages of which are every day more and more apparent."

When this letter was read to the noble-minded Isabella, and she found how grossly Columbus had been wronged and the royal authority abused, her mind was filled with mingled sympathy and indignation. The tidings were confirmed by a letter from the alcalde or corregidor of Cadiz, into whose hands Columbus and his brothers had been delivered, until the pleasure of their majesties should be known*; and by another letter from Alonzo de Villejo, expressed in terms accordant with his humane and honourable conduct towards his illustrious prisoner.

However Ferdinand might have secretly felt disposed against Columbus, the momentary tide of public feeling was not to be resisted. He joined with his generous queen in her reprobation

* Oviedo, Cronica, l. iii. c. 6.

of the treatment of the admiral, and both sovereigns hastened to give evidence to the world, that his imprisonment had been without their authority, and contrary to their wishes. Without waiting to receive any documents that might arrive from Bobadilla, they sent orders to Cadiz that the prisoners should be instantly set at liberty, and treated with all distinction. They wrote a letter to Columbus, couched in terms of gratitude and affection, expressing their grief at all that he had suffered, and inviting him to court. They ordered, at the same time, that two thousand ducats should be advanced to defray his expenses*.

The loyal heart of Columbus was again cheered by this declaration of his sovereigns. He felt conscious of his integrity, and anticipated an immediate restitution of all his rights and dignities. He appeared at court in Granada on the 17th of December, not as a man ruined and disgraced, but richly dressed, and attended by an honourable retinue. He was received by their majesties with unqualified favour and distinction. When

* Las Casas, l. i., c. 182. Two thousand ducats, or two thousand eight hundred and forty-six dollars, equivalent to eight thousand five hundred and thirty-eight dollars of the present day.

the queen beheld this venerable man approach, and thought on all he had deserved and all that he had suffered, she was moved to tears. Columbus had borne up firmly against the stern conflicts of the world,—he had endured with lofty scorn the injuries and insults of ignoble men, but he possessed strong and quick sensibility. When he found himself thus kindly received by his sovereigns, and beheld tears in the benign eyes of Isabella, his long-suppressed feelings burst forth: he threw himself upon his knees, and for some time could not utter a word for the violence of his tears and sobbings*.

Ferdinand and Isabella raised him from the ground, and endeavoured to encourage him by the most gracious expressions. As soon as he regained his self-possession, he entered into an eloquent and high-minded vindication of his loyalty, and the zeal he had ever felt for the glory and advantage of the Spanish crown. If at any time he had erred, it was through inexperience in government, and the extraordinary difficulties by which he had been surrounded.

* Herrera, decad. 1, l. iv., c. 10.

There needed no vindication on his part. The intemperance of his enemies had been his best advocate. He stood in presence of his sovereigns a deeply-injured man, and it remained for them to vindicate themselves to the world from the charge of ingratitude towards their most deserving subject. They expressed their indignation at the proceedings of Bobadilla, which they disavowed, as contrary to their instructions, and they promised that he should be immediately dismissed from his command.

In fact, no public notice was taken of the charges sent home by Bobadilla, nor of the letters which had been written in support of them. The sovereigns took every occasion to treat Columbus with favour and distinction, assuring him that his grievances should be redressed, his property restored, and that he should be reinstated in all his privileges and dignities.

It was on the latter point that Columbus was chiefly solicitous. Mercenary considerations had scarcely any weight in his mind. Glory had been the great object of his ambition, and he felt, that as long as he remained suspended from his em-

ployments, a tacit censure rested on his name. He expected, therefore, that the moment the sovereigns should be satisfied of the rectitude of his conduct, they would be eager to make him amends; that a restitution of his viceroyalty would immediately take place, and he should return in triumph to San Domingo. Here, however, he was doomed to experience a disappointment which threw a gloom over the remainder of his days. To account for this flagrant want of justice and gratitude in the crown, it is expedient to notice a variety of events which had materially affected the interests of Columbus in the eyes of the politic Ferdinand.

CHAPTER II.

CONTEMPORARY VOYAGES OF DISCOVERY.

THE general license granted by the Spanish sovereigns in 1495, to undertake voyages of discovery, had given rise to various expeditions by enterprising individuals, chiefly persons who had sailed with Columbus in his first voyages. The government, unable to fit out many armaments itself, was pleased to have its territories thus extended, free of cost, and at the same time its treasury benefited by a share of the proceeds of these voyages, which was reserved as a kind of duty to the crown. These expeditions had chiefly taken place while Columbus was in partial disgrace with the sovereigns. His own charts and journal served as guides to the adventurers; and his magnificent accounts of Paria and the adjacent coasts had chiefly excited their cupidity.

Beside the expedition of Ojeda, already noticed, in the course of which he had touched at Xaragua,

one had been undertaken at the same time by Pedro Alonzo Niño, native of Moguer, an able pilot, who had been with Columbus in the voyages to Cuba and Paria. Having obtained a license, he interested a rich merchant of Seville in the undertaking, who fitted out a caravel of fifty tons burden, under condition that his brother Christoval should have the command. They sailed from the bar of Saltes, a few days after Ojeda had sailed from Cadiz, in the spring of 1499, and arriving on the coast of Terra firma, on the south of Paria, they ran along it for some distance, passed through the gulf, and thence went one hundred and thirty leagues, along the shore of the present republic of Columbia, visiting what was afterwards called the Pearl Coast. They landed in various places, disposed of their European trifles to immense profit, and returned with a large store of gold and pearls, having made, in their diminutive bark, one of the most extensive and lucrative voyages that had yet been accomplished.

About the same time, the Pinzons, that family of bold and opulent navigators, fitted out an armament of four caravels at Palos, manned in a

great measure by their own relations and friends. Several experienced pilots embarked in it who had been with Columbus to Paria, and it was commanded by Vicente Pinzon, who had been captain of a caravel in the squadron of the admiral on his first voyage.

Pinzon was a hardy and experienced seaman, and did not, like the others, follow closely in the track of Columbus. Sailing in December, 1499, he passed the Canary and Cape de Verde Islands, standing south-west, until he lost sight of the polar star. Here he encountered a terrible storm, and was exceedingly perplexed and confounded by the new aspect of the heavens. Nothing was yet known of the southern hemisphere, nor of the beautiful constellation of the cross, which in those regions has since supplied to mariners the place of the north star. The voyagers had expected to find at the south pole a star correspondent to that of the north. They were dismayed at beholding no guide of the kind, and thought there must be some prominent swelling of the earth, which hid the pole from their view *.

* P. Martyr, decad. 1, l. ix.

Pinzon continued on, however, with great intrepidity. On the 26th of January, 1500, he saw, at a distance, a great headland, which he called Cape Santa Maria de la Consolacion, but which has since been named Cape St. Augustine. He landed and took possession of the country in the name of their catholic majesties; being a part of the territories since called the Brazils. Standing westward from hence, he discovered the Maragnon, since called the River of the Amazons, traversed the Gulf of Paria, and continued across the Caribbean sea and the Gulf of Mexico, until he found himself among the Bahamas, where he lost two of his vessels on the rocks, near the island of Jumeto. He returned to Palos in September, having added to his former glory that of being the first European who had crossed the equinoctial line in the western ocean, and of having discovered the famous kingdom of Brazil, from its commencement at the River Maragnon to its most eastern boundary. As a reward for his achievements, power was granted to him to colonise and govern the lands which he had discovered, and which extended

southward from a little beyond the River of Maragnon to Cape St. Augustine *.

The little port of Palos, which had been so slow in furnishing the first squadron for Columbus, was now continually agitated by the passion for discovery. Shortly after the sailing of Pinzon, another expedition was fitted out there, by Diego Lepe, a native of the place, and was manned by his adventurous townsmen. He sailed in the same direction with Pinzon; but he discovered more of the southern continent than any other voyager of the day, or for twelve years afterwards. He doubled Cape St. Augustine, and ascertained that the coast beyond ran to the south west. He landed and performed the usual ceremonies of taking possession in the name of the Spanish sovereigns, and in one place carved their names on a magnificent tree, of such enormous magnitude, that seventeen men with their hands joined could not embrace the trunk. What enhanced the merit of his discoveries was, that he had never sailed with Columbus. He had with him, however,

* Herrera, decad. 1, l. iv., c. 12. Muños, Hist. N. Mundo, part unpublished.

several skilful pilots, who had accompanied the admiral in his voyages *.

Another expedition of two vessels sailed from Cadiz, in October, 1500, under command of Rodrigo Bastides of Seville. He explored the coast of Terra firma, passing Cape de la Vela, the western limits of the previous discoveries on the main land, continuing on to a port since called The Retreat, where afterwards was founded the sea-port of Nombre de Dios. His vessels being nearly destroyed by the teredo, which abounds in those seas, he had great difficulty in reaching Xaragua in Hispaniola, where he lost his two caravels, and proceeded with his crew by land to San Domingo. Here he was seized and imprisoned by Bobadilla, under pretext that he had treated for gold with the natives of Xaragua.

Such was the swarm of Spanish expeditions immediately resulting from the enterprises of Columbus: but others were also undertaken by foreign nations. In the year 1497, Sebastian Cabot, son of a Venetian merchant, resident in Bristol, sailing in the service of Henry VII., of England, navigated

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind., l. ii., c. 2. Muños, part unpublished.

to the northern seas of the New World. Adopting the idea of Columbus, he sailed in quest of the shores of Cathay, and hoped to find a north-west passage to India. In this voyage he discovered Newfoundland, coasted Labrador to the fifty-sixth degree of north latitude, and then returning, ran down south-west to the Floridas, when, his provisions beginning to fail, he returned to England *. But vague and scanty accounts of this voyage exist, which was important, as including the first discovery of the northern continent of the New World.

The discoveries of rival nations, however, which most excited the attention and jealousy of the Spanish crown, were those of the Portuguese. Vasquez de Gama, a man of rank, and of consummate talent and intrepidity †, had, at length, accomplished the great design of the late Prince Henry of Portugal, and by doubling the Cape of Good Hope in the year 1497, had opened the long-sought-for route to India.

Immediately after Gama's return, a fleet of thirteen sail was fitted out to visit the magnificent

* Hakluyt's Collection of Voyages, vol. iii., p. 7.

† Lafiteau. Conquêtes des Portugais.

countries of which he brought accounts. This expedition sailed on the 9th of March, 1500, for Calicut, under the command of Pedro Alvarez de Cabral. Having passed the Cape de Verde Islands, he sought to avoid the calms prevalent on the coast of Guinea, by stretching far to the west. Suddenly, on the 25th of April, he came in sight of land, unknown to any one in his squadron; for as yet, they had not heard of the discoveries of Pinzon and Lepe. He at first supposed it to be some great island; but after coasting it for some time, he became persuaded that it must be part of a continent. Having ranged along it somewhat beyond the fifteenth degree of southern latitude, he landed at a harbour which he called Porto Securo, and taking possession of the country for the crown of Portugal, despatched a ship to Lisbon with the important tidings *. In this way did the Brazils come into the possession of Portugal, being to the eastward of the conventional line settled with Spain as the boundaries of their respective territories. Dr. Robertson, in recording this voyage

* Lafiteau, l. ii.

of Cabral, concludes with one of his just and elegant remarks.

"Columbus' discovery of the New World was," he observes, "the effort of an active genius, guided by experience, and acting upon a regular plan, executed with no less courage than perseverance. But from this adventure of the Portuguese, it appears that chance might have accomplished that great design, which it is now the pride of human reason to have formed and perfected. If the sagacity of Columbus had not conducted mankind to America, Cabral, by a fortunate accident, might have led them, a few years later, to the knowledge of that extensive continent *."

* Robertson, Hist. America, book ii.

CHAPTER III.

NICHOLAS DE OVANDO APPOINTED TO SUPERSEDE BOBADILLA.

[1501.]

The numerous discoveries briefly noticed in the preceding chapter, had produced a powerful effect upon the mind of Ferdinand. His ambition, his avarice, and his jealousy, were equally inflamed. He beheld boundless regions, teeming with all kinds of riches, daily opening before the enterprises of his subjects; but he beheld at the same time other nations launching forth into competition, emulous to share with him the golden world which he was eager to monopolize. The expeditions of the English, and the accidental discovery of the Brazils by the Portuguese, caused him much uneasiness. To secure his possession of the continent, he determined to establish local governments or commands, in the most important places, all to be subject to a general government, established at San Domingo, which was to be the metropolis.

With these considerations, the government,

heretofore granted to Columbus, had risen vastly in importance; and while the restitution of it was the more desirable in his eyes, it became more and more a matter of repugnance to the selfish and jealous monarch. He had long repented having vested such great powers and prerogatives in any subject, particularly in a foreigner. At the time of granting them, he had no anticipation of such boundless countries to be placed under his command. He appeared almost to consider himself outwitted by Columbus in the arrangement he had made; and every succeeding discovery, instead of increasing his grateful sense of the obligation, only made him repine the more at the growing magnitude of the reward. At length, however, the affair of Bobadilla had effected a temporary exclusion of Columbus from his high offices, and the wary monarch secretly determined that the road to his former distinctions should never again be opened.

Perhaps Ferdinand may really have entertained doubts as to the innocence of Columbus, with respect to the various charges made against him. He may have doubted also the sincerity of his

loyalty, being a stranger, when he should find himself strong in his command, at a great distance from the parent country, with immense and opulent regions under his control. Columbus himself, in his letters, alludes to reports circulated by his enemies, that he intended either to set up an independent sovereignty, or to deliver his discoveries into the hands of other potentates; and he appears to fear that these slanders may have made some impression in the mind of Ferdinand. But there was one other consideration which had no less force with the monarch in withholding this great act of justice. Columbus was no longer indispensable to him. He had made his great discovery; he had struck out the route to the New World, and now any one could follow it. A number of able navigators had sprung up under his auspices, and acquired experience in his voyages. They were daily besieging the throne with offers to fit out expeditions at their own cost, and to yield a share of the profits to the crown. Why should he, therefore, confer princely dignities and prerogatives for that which men were daily offering to perform gratuitously?

Such, from his after conduct, appears to have been the jealous and selfish policy which actuated Ferdinand in forbearing to reinstate Columbus in those dignities and privileges which had so solemnly been granted to him by treaty, and which it was acknowledged that he had never forfeited by misconduct.

This deprivation, however, was declared to be only temporary; and plausible reasons were given for the delay in his reappointment. It was observed that the elements of those violent factions, which had recently been in arms against him, yet existed in the island; his immediate return might produce fresh exasperation; his personal safety would be endangered, and the island again thrown into confusion. Though Bobadilla, therefore, was to be immediately dismissed from command, it was deemed advisable to send out some officer of talent and discretion to supersede him, who might dispassionately investigate the recent disorders, remedy the abuses which had arisen, and expel all dissolute and factious persons from the colony. He should hold the government for two years, by which time it was trusted

that all angry passions would be allayed, and turbulent individuals removed: Columbus might then resume the command with comfort to himself and advantage to the crown. With these reasons, and the promise which accompanied them, Columbus was obliged to content himself. There can be no doubt that they were sincere on the part of Isabella, and that it was her intention to reinstate him in the full enjoyment of his rights and dignities, after his apparently necessary suspension. Ferdinand, however, by his subsequent conduct, has forfeited all claim to any favourable opinion of the kind.

The person chosen to supersede Bobadilla was Don Nicholas de Ovando, commander of Lares, of the order of Alcantara: he is described as of the middle size, fair complexioned, with a red beard, and a modest look, yet a tone of authority. He was fluent in speech, and gracious and courteous in his manners. A man of great prudence, says Las Casas, and capable of governing many people, but not of governing the Indians, on whom he inflicted incalculable injuries. He possessed great veneration for justice, was an enemy to avarice,

sober in his mode of living, and of such humility, that when he rose afterwards to be grand commander of the order of Alcantara, he would never allow himself to be addressed by the title of respect attached to it*. Such is the picture drawn of him by historians; but his conduct in several important instances is in direct contradiction to it. He appears to have been plausible and subtle, as well as fluent and courteous; his humility concealed a great love of command, and in his transactions with Columbus, he was certainly both ungenerous and unjust.

The various arrangements to be made, according to the new plan of colonial government, delayed for some time the departure of Ovando. In the mean time, every arrival brought intelligence of the disastrous state of the island, under the mal-administration of Bobadilla. He had commenced his career by an opposite policy to that of Columbus. Imagining that rigorous rule had been the rock on which his predecessors had split, he sought to conciliate the public by all kinds of indulgence. Having at the very outset relaxed

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind., l. ii., c. 3.

the reins of justice and morality, he lost all command over the community; and such disorder and licentiousness ensued, that many, even of the opponents of Columbus, looked back with regret upon the strict but wholesome rule of himself and the Adelantado.

Bobadilla was not so much a bad as an imprudent and a weak man. He had not considered the dangerous excesses to which his policy would lead. Rash in grasping authority, he was feeble and temporizing in the exercise of it: he could not look beyond the present exigency. One dangerous indulgence granted to the colonists called for another; each was ceded in its turn, and thus he went on from error to error,—shewing that in government there is as much danger to be apprehended from a weak as from a bad man.

He had sold the farms and estates of the crown at low prices, observing that it was not the wish of the monarchs to enrich themselves by them, but that they should redound to the profit of their subjects. He granted universal permission to work the mines, paying only an eleventh of the produce to government. To prevent any diminu-

tion in the revenue, it became necessary, of course, to increase the quantity of gold collected. He obliged the caciques, therefore, to furnish each Spaniard with Indians, to assist him both in the labours of the field and of the mine. To carry this into more complete effect, he made an enumeration of the natives of the island, then reduced them into classes, and distributed them, according to his favour or caprice, among the colonists. The latter, at his suggestion, associated themselves in partnerships of two persons each, who were to assist one another with their respective capitals and Indians, one superintending the labours of the field, and the other the search for gold. The only injunction of Bobadilla was, to produce large quantities of ore. He had one saying continually in his mouth, which shews the pernicious and temporizing principle upon which he acted: "Make the most of your time," he would say, "there is no knowing how long it will last," alluding to the possibility of his being speedily recalled. The colonists acted up to his advice, and so hard did they drive the poor natives, that the eleventh yielded more revenue to the crown than had ever

been produced by the third under the government of Columbus. In the mean time the unhappy natives suffered under all kinds of cruelties from their inhuman task-masters. Little used to labour, feeble of constitution, and accustomed in their beautiful and luxuriant island to a life of ease and freedom, they sunk under the toils imposed upon them, and the severities by which they were enforced. Las Casas gives an indignant picture of the capricious tyranny exercised over the Indians by worthless Spaniards, many of whom had been transported convicts from the dungeons of Castile. These wretches, who in their own countries had been the vilest among the vile, here assumed the tone of grand cavaliers. They insisted upon being attended by trains of servants. They took the daughters and female relations of caciques for their domestics, or rather for their concubines, nor did they limit themselves in number. When they travelled, instead of using the horses and mules with which they were provided, they obliged the natives to transport them upon their shoulders in litters, or hammocks, with others attending to hold umbrellas of palm leaves over their heads to

keep off the sun, and fans of feathers to cool them; and Las Casas affirms that he has seen the backs and shoulders of the unfortunate Indians who bore these litters, raw and bleeding from the task. When these arrogant upstarts arrived at an Indian village, they consumed and lavished away the provisions of the inhabitants, seizing upon whatever pleased their caprice, and obliging the cacique and his subjects to dance before them for their amusement. Their very pleasures were attended with cruelty. They never addressed the natives but by the most degrading terms, and on the least offence, or the least freak of ill humour, they inflicted blows and lashes, and even death itself*.

Such is but a faint picture of the evils which sprung up under the feeble rule of Bobadilla; and which are sorrowfully described by Las Casas, from actual observation, as he visited the island just at the close of his administration. Bobadilla had trusted to the immense amount of gold, wrung from the miseries of the natives, to atone for all errors, and to secure favour with the sovereigns; but he had totally mistaken his course. The abuses

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind., l. ii., c. 1. MS.

of his government soon reached the royal ear, and above all, the wrongs of the natives reached the benevolent heart of Isabella. Nothing was more calculated to arouse her indignation, and she urged the speedy departure of Ovando to put a stop to these enormities.

In conformity to the plan already mentioned, the government of Ovando extended over the islands and Terra firma, of which Hispaniola was to be the metropolis. He was to enter upon the exercise of his powers immediately upon his arrival, by procuration, sending home Bobadilla by the return of the fleet. He was instructed to inquire diligently into the late abuses, punishing the delinquents without favour or partiality, and removing all worthless persons from the island. He was to revoke immediately the license granted by Bobadilla for the general search after gold, it having been given without royal authority. He was to require, for the crown, a third of all that was collected, and one half of all that should be collected in future. He was empowered to build towns, granting them the privileges enjoyed by municipal corporations of Spain, and obliging

the Spaniards, and particularly the soldiers, to reside in them, instead of scattering themselves over the island. Among many sage provisions, there were others injurious and illiberal, characteristic of an age when the principles of commerce were but little understood, but which were continued by Spain long after the rest of the world had discarded them as the errors of dark and unenlightened times. The crown monopolized the trade of the colonies. No one could carry merchandises there on his own account. A royal factor was appointed, who was to be the sole merchant through whom were to be obtained supplies of European articles. The crown reserved to itself not only exclusive property in the mines, but in precious stones, and like objects of extraordinary value, and also in dye-woods. No strangers, and above all, no Moors or Jews, were permitted to establish themselves in the island, or to go upon voyages of discovery. Such were some of the restrictions upon trade which Spain imposed upon her colonies, and which were followed up by others equally illiberal. Her commercial policy has been the scoff of modern times; but may not the pre-

sent restrictions on trade, imposed by the most intelligent nations, be equally the wonder and the jest of future ages?

Isabella was particularly careful in providing for the kind treatment of the Indians. Ovando was ordered to assemble the caciques, and declare to them, that the sovereigns took them and their people under their especial protection. They were merely to pay tribute like other subjects of the crown, and it was to be collected with the utmost mildness and gentleness. Great pains were to be taken in their religious instruction; for which purpose twelve Franciscan friars were sent out, with a prelate named Antonio de Espinal, a venerable and pious man. This was the first formal introduction of the Franciscan order in the New World*. All these precautions with respect to the natives were defeated by one unwary provision. It was permitted that the Indians might be compelled to work in the mines, and in other employments; but this was limited to the royal service. They were to be engaged as hired labourers, and punctually paid.

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind., l. ii., cap. 3. MS.

But while the sovereigns were making regulations for the relief of the Indians, with that inconsistency frequent in human judgment, they encouraged a gross invasion of the rights and the welfare of another race of human beings. Among their various decrees on this occasion, we find the first trace of negro slavery in the New World. It was permitted to carry to the colony Negro slaves, born among Christians*; that is to say, slaves born in Seville and other parts of Spain, the children and descendants of natives brought from the Atlantic coast of Africa, where such traffic had for some time been carried on by the Spaniards and Portuguese. There are signal events in the course of history, which sometimes bear the appearance of temporal judgments. It is a fact worthy of observation, that Hispaniola, the place were this flagrant sin against nature and humanity was first introduced into the New World, has been the first to exhibit an awful retribution.

Amidst the various concerns which claimed the attention of the sovereigns, the interests of Columbus were not forgotten. Ovando was ordered

* Herrera, Hist. Ind., decad. 1, l. iv., c. 12.

to examine into all his accounts, without undertaking to pay them off. He was to ascertain the damages he had ascertained by his imprisonment, the interruption of his privileges, and the confiscation of his effects. All the property confiscated by Bobadilla was to be restored; or if sold to be made good. If it had been employed in the royal service, Columbus was to be indemnified out of the treasury; if Bobadilla had appropriated it to his own use, he was to account for it out of his private purse. Equal care was to be taken to indemnify the brothers of the admiral for the losses they had wrongfully suffered by their arrest.

Columbus was likewise to receive the arrears of his revenues; and the same were to be punctually paid to him in future. He was permitted to have a factor resident in the island, to be present at the melting and marking of the gold, to collect his dues, and in short to attend to all his affairs. To this office he appointed Alonzo Sanchez de Carvajal; and the sovereigns commanded that his agent should be treated with great respect.

The fleet appointed to convey Ovando to his government was the largest that had yet sailed

to the New World. It consisted of thirty sail, five of them from ninety to one hundred and fifty tons burden, twenty-four caravels from thirty to ninety, and one bark of twenty-five tons*. The number of souls embarked in this fleet, was about twenty-five hundred; many of them persons of rank and distinction, with their families.

That Ovando might appear with dignity in his new office, he was allowed to use silks, brocades, precious stones, and other articles of sumptuous attire, which were prohibited at that time in Spain, in consequence of the ruinous ostentation of the nobility. He was permitted to have twenty-two esquires as his body-guard, ten of whom were horsemen. With this expedition, sailed Don Alonzo Maldonado, appointed as alguazil mayor, or chief justice, in place of Roldan, who was to be sent to Spain. There were artisans of various kinds: to these were added a physician, surgeon, and apothecary; and twenty-three married men † with their families, all of respectable character, destined to be

* Muños, part inedit. Las Casas says the fleet consisted of thirty-two sail. He states from memory, however: Muños from documents.

† Muños, H. N. Mundo, part inedit.

distributed in four towns, and to enjoy peculiar privileges, that they might form the basis of a sound and useful population. They were to displace an equal number of the idle and dissolute who were to be sent from the island: this excellent measure had been especially urged and entreated by Columbus. There was also live stock, artillery, arms, munitions of all kinds; every thing in short that was required for the supply of the island.

Such was the style in which Ovando, a favourite of Ferdinand, and a native subject of rank, was fitted out to enter upon the government withheld from Columbus. The fleet put to sea on the thirteenth of February, 1502. In the early part of the voyage it was encountered by a terrible storm; one of the ships foundered, with one hundred and twenty passengers; the others were obliged to throw overboard every thing that was on deck, and were completely scattered. The shores of Spain were strewed with articles from the fleet, and a rumour spread that all the ships had perished. When this reached the sovereigns, they were so overcome with grief that they shut themselves up for eight days, and admitted no one to

their presence. The rumour proved to be incorrect: but one ship was lost. The others assembled again at the island of Gomera in the Canaries, and pursuing their voyage arrived at San Domingo on the 15th of April*.

* Las Casas, H. Ind., l. ii., c. 3. MS.

CHAPTER IV.

PROPOSITION OF COLUMBUS RELATIVE TO THE RECOVERY OF THE HOLY SEPULCHRE.

[1500—1501.]

Columbus remained in the city of Granada for upwards of nine months, endeavouring to extricate his affairs from the confusion into which they had been thrown by the rash conduct of Bobadilla, and soliciting the restoration of his offices and dignities. During this time he constantly experienced the smiles and attentions of the sovereigns, and promises were repeatedly made him that he should ultimately be reinstated in all his honours. He had long since, however, ascertained the great interval that may exist between promise and performance in a court. Had he been of a morbid and repining spirit, he had ample food for misanthropy. He beheld the career of glory which he had opened, thronged by favoured adventurers; he witnessed preparations making to convey with unusual pomp, a successor to that government from which he had been

so wrongfully and rudely ejected; in the mean while his own career was interrupted, and as far as public employ is a gage of royal favour, he remained apparently in disgrace.

The sanguine temperament of Columbus was not long to be depressed; if checked in one direction, it broke forth in another. His visionary imagination was as an internal light, which, in the darkest times, repelled all outward gloom, and filled his mind with splendid images and glorious speculations. In this time of evil, his vow to furnish, within seven years from the time of his discovery, fifty thousand foot soldiers, and five thousand horse, for the recovery of the holy sepulchre, recurred to his memory with peculiar force. The time had elapsed, but the vow remained unfulfilled, and the means to perform it had failed him. The New World, with all its treasures, had as yet produced expense instead of profit; and so far from being in a situation to set armies on foot by his own contributions, he found himself without property, without power, and without employ.

Destitute of the means of accomplishing his pious intentions, he considered it his duty to incite

the sovereigns to the enterprise; and he felt emboldened to do so, from having originally proposed it as the great object to which the profits of his discoveries should be dedicated. He set to work, therefore, with his accustomed zeal to prepare arguments for the purpose. During the intervals of business, he sought into the prophecies of the holy scriptures, the writings of the fathers, and all kinds of sacred and speculative sources, for mystic portents and revelations which might be construed to bear upon the discovery of the New World, the conversion of the Gentiles, and the recovery of the holy sepulchre: three great events which he supposed to be predestined to succeed each other. These passages, with the assistance of a Carthusian friar, he arranged in order, illustrated by poetry, and collected into a manuscript volume, to be delivered to the sovereigns. He prepared, at the same time, a long letter, written with his usual fervour of spirit and simplicity of heart. It is one of those singular compositions which lay open the visionary part of his character, and shew the mystic and speculative reading with which he was accustomed to nurture his solemn and soaring imagination.

In this letter he urged their majesties to set on foot a crusade for the deliverance of Jerusalem from the power of the unbelievers. He entreated them not to reject his present advice as extravagant and impracticable, nor to heed the discredit that might be cast upon it by others; reminding them that his great scheme of discovery had originally been treated with similar contempt. He avowed in the fullest manner his persuasion, that, from his earliest infancy, he had been chosen by heaven for the accomplishment of those two great designs, the discovery of the New World, and the rescue of the holy sepulchre. For this purpose, in his tender years, he had been guided by a divine impulse to embrace the profession of the sea, a mode of life, he observes, which inclines a man to inquire into the mysteries of nature; and he had been gifted with a curious spirit, to read all kind of chronicles and works of philosophy. In meditating upon these, his understanding had been opened by the Deity, "as with a palpable hand," so as to discover the navigation to the Indies, and he had been inflamed with ardour to undertake the enterprise.

"Animated by this zeal," he adds, "I came to your majesties: all who heard of my enterprise mocked at it; all the sciences I had acquired profited me nothing; seven years did I pass in your royal court, disputing the case with persons of great authority and learned in all the arts, and in the end they decided that all was vain. In your majesties alone remained faith and constancy. Who will doubt that this light was from the holy scriptures, illumining you as well as myself with rays of marvellous brightness?"

These ideas, so repeatedly, and solemnly, and artlessly expressed, by a man of the fervent piety of Columbus, shew how truly his discovery arose from the working of his own mind, and not from information furnished by others. He considered it a divine intimation, and the fulfilment of what had been foretold by our Saviour and the prophets. Still he regarded it but as a minor event preparatory to the great enterprise, the recovery of the holy sepulchre. He pronounced it a miracle effected by heaven, to animate himself and others to that holy undertaking; and he assured their majesties that, if they had faith in his present as

in his former proposition, they would assuredly be rewarded with equally triumphant success. He conjured them not to heed the sneers of such as might scoff at him as one unlearned, as an ignorant mariner, a worldly man; reminding them that the Holy Spirit works not merely in the learned, but also in the ignorant; nay, that it reveals things to come, not merely by rational beings, but by prodigies in animals, and by mystic signs in the air and in the heavens.

The enterprise here suggested by Columbus, however idle and extravagant it may appear in the present day, was in unison with the temper of the times, and of the court to which it was proposed. The vein of mystic erudition by which it was enforced, likewise, was suited to an age when the reveries of the cloister still controlled the operations of the cabinet and the camp. The spirit of the crusades had not yet passed away. In the cause of the church, and at the instigation of its dignitaries, every cavalier was ready to draw his sword; and religion mingled a glowing and devoted enthusiasm with the ordinary excitement of warfare. Ferdinand was a religious bigot; and

the devotion of Isabella went as near to bigotry as her liberal mind and magnanimous spirit would permit. Both the sovereigns were under the influence of ecclesiastical politicians, constantly guiding their enterprises in a direction to redound to the temporal power and glory of the church. The recent conquest of Granada had been considered a European crusade, and had gained to the sovereigns the epithet of Catholic. It was natural to think of extending their sacred victories still further, and retaliating upon the infidels their domination of Spain and their long triumphs over the cross. In fact, the Duke of Medina Sidonia had made a recent inroad into Barbary, in the course of which he had taken the city of Melilla, and his expedition had been pronounced a renewal of the holy wars against the infidels in Africa*.

There was nothing, therefore, in the proposition of Columbus that could be regarded as preposterous, considering the period and circumstances

* Garibay, Hist. España, l. xix., c. 6. Among the collections existing in the library of the late Prince Sebastian, there is a folio which, among other things, contains a paper or letter, in which is a calculation of the probable expenses of an army of twenty thousand men, for the conquest of the holy land. It is dated in 1509 or 1510, and the handwriting appears to be of the same time.

in which it was made, though it strongly illustrates his own enthusiastic and visionary character. It must be recollected that it was meditated in the courts of the Alhambra, among the splendid remains of Moorish grandeur, where, but a few years before, he had beheld the standard of the faith elevated in triumph above the symbols of infidelity. It appears to have been the offspring of one of those modes of high excitement, when, as has been observed, his soul was elevated by the contemplation of his great and glorious office; when he considered himself under divine inspiration, imparting the will of heaven, and fulfilling the high and holy purposes for which he had been predestined *.

* Columbus was not singular in this belief; it was entertained by many of his zealous and learned admirers. The erudite lapidary, Jayme Ferrer, in the letter written to Columbus in 1495, at the command of the sovereigns, observes: "I see in this a great mystery: the divine and infallible Providence sent the great St. Thomas from the west into the east, to manifest in India our holy and Catholic faith; and you, señor, he sent in an opposite direction, from the east into the west, until you have arrived in the Orient, into the extreme part of Upper India, that the people may hear that which their ancestors neglected of the preaching of St. Thomas. Thus shall be accomplished what was written, *in omnem terram exibit sonus eorum.*" * * * And again, "The office which you hold, señor, places you in the light of an apostle and ambassador of God, sent by his divine judgment, to make known his holy name in unknown lands."—Letra de Mossen Jayme Ferrer.—Navarrete Collection, t. ii. d. 68.

CHAPTER V.

PREPARATIONS OF COLUMBUS FOR A FOURTH VOYAGE OF DISCOVERY.

[1501—1502.]

The speculation relative to the recovery of the holy sepulchre, held but a temporary sway over the mind of Columbus. His thoughts soon returned, with renewed ardour, to their wonted channel. He became impatient of inaction, and soon conceived a leading object for another enterprise of discovery. The achievement of Vasco de Gama, of the long-attempted navigation to India by the Cape of Good Hope, was one of the signal events of the day. Pedro Alvarez Cabral, following in his track, had made a most successful voyage, and returned with his vessels laden with the precious commodities of the east. The riches of Calicut were now the theme of every tongue. The trade in diamonds and precious stones from the mines of Hindostan; in pearls, gold, silver, amber, ivory, and porcelain; in silken stuffs, costly woods, gums, aromatics, and spices of all kinds.

The discoveries of the savage regions of the New World, as yet brought little revenue to Spain; but this route suddenly opened to the luxurious countries of the east, was pouring in immediate wealth upon Portugal.

Columbus was roused to emulation by these accounts. He now conceived the idea of a voyage, in which, with his usual enthusiasm, he hoped to surpass not merely the discovery of Vasco de Gama, but even those of his own previous expeditions. According to his own observations in his voyage to Paria, and the reports of other navigators, particularly of Roderigo Basledes, who had pursued the same route to a greater distance, it appeared that the coast of Terra firma stretched far to the west. The southern coast of Cuba, which he considered a part of the Asiatic continent, stretched onwards towards the same point. The currents of the Caribbean sea must pass between those lands. He was persuaded, therefore, that there must be a strait existing somewhere thereabout, opening into the Indian sea. The situation in which he placed his conjectural strait, was somewhere about what it is at present

called the Isthmus of Darien *. Could he but discover such a passage, and thus link the New World he had discovered, with the opulent oriental regions of the old, he felt that he should make a magnificent close to his labours, and consummate this great object of his existence.

When Columbus unfolded his plan to the sovereigns, it was listened to with great attention. Certain of the royal council, it is said, endeavoured to throw difficulties in the way; observing that the various exigencies of the times, and the low state of the royal treasury, rendered any new expedition highly inexpedient. They intimated also that Columbus ought not to be employed, until his good conduct in Hispaniola was satisfactorily established by letters from Ovando. These narrow-minded suggestions failed in their aim: Isabella had implicit confidence in the integrity of Columbus. As to the expense, she felt that while furnishing so powerful a fleet and splendid retinue to Ovando, to take possession of his government,

* Las Casas, l. ii. c. 4. Las Casas specifies the vicinity of Nombre de Dios as the place. Bastides had explored as far west as that place, and Columbus probably considered the strait as existing at no great distance beyond.

it would be ungenerous and ungrateful to refuse a few ships to the discoverer of the New World, to enable him to prosecute his illustrious enterprises. As to Ferdinand, his cupidity was aroused at the idea of being soon put in possession of a more direct and safe route to those countries with which the crown of Portugal was opening so lucrative a trade. The project also would occupy the admiral for a considerable time, and, while it diverted him from claims of an inconvenient nature, would employ his talents in a way most beneficial to the crown. However the king might doubt his abilities as a legislator, he had the highest opinion of his skill and judgment as a navigator. If such a strait as the one supposed were really in existence, Columbus was, of all men in the world, the one to discover it. His proposition, therefore, was promptly acceded to; he was authorized to fit out an armament immediately; and repaired to Seville in the autumn of 1501, to make the necessary preparations.

Though his substantial enterprise diverted his attention from his romantic expedition for the recovery of the holy sepulchre, it still continued to

haunt his mind. He left his manuscript collection of researches among the prophecies, in the hands of a devout friar of the name of Gaspar Gorricio, who assisted to complete it. This, Columbus presented to the sovereigns, accompanied by his enthusiastic letter already mentioned, early in the following year. In February, also, he wrote a letter to Pope Alexander VII. In this letter he apologizes, on account of indispensable occupations, for not having repaired to Rome, according to his original intention, to give an account of his grand discoveries. After briefly relating them, he adds that his enterprises had been undertaken with intent of dedicating the gains to the recovery of the holy sepulchre. He mentions the vow which he had expressed in a letter to the Spanish sovereigns, to furnish, within seven years, fifty thousand foot and five thousand horse for the purpose, and another like force within five succeeding years. This pious intention, he laments, had been impeded by the arts of the devil, and he feared, without divine aid, would be entirely frustrated; as the government granted him in perpetuity had been taken from him. He informs his Holiness of his being

about to embark on another voyage, and promises solemnly, on his return, to repair to Rome without delay, to relate everything by word of mouth, as well as to present him with an account of his voyages, which he had kept from the commencement to the present time, in the style of the commentaries of Cæsar*.

It was about this time, also, that he sent his letter on the subject of the sepulchre to the sovereigns, together with the collection of prophecies. We have no account of the manner in which the proposition was received. Ferdinand, with all his bigotry, was a shrewd and worldly prince. Instead of a chivalrous crusade against Jerusalem, he preferred making a pacific arrangement with the grand soldan of Egypt, who had menaced the destruction of the sacred edifice. He despatched, therefore, the learned Peter Martyr, so distinguished for his historical writings, as ambassador to the soldan, by whom all ancient grievances between the two powers were satisfactorily adjusted, and arrangements made for the conserva-

* Navarrete, Collec. Viag., t. ii., p. 145.

tion of the holy sepulchre, and the protection of all Christian pilgrims resorting to it.

In the mean time Columbus went on with the preparations for his contemplated voyage, though he was able to proceed but slowly, owing, as Charlevoix intimates, to the artifices and delays of Fonseca and his agents. He craved permission to touch at the island of Hispaniola on his outward voyage, for supplies necessary in so long an expedition. This, however, the sovereigns forbade. They knew that he had many enemies in the island, and that the place would be in great agitation from the arrival of Ovando, and the removal of Bobadilla. They consented, however, that he should touch for a short time there on his return, by which time they hoped the island would be restored to tranquillity. Columbus was permitted to take with him in this expedition, his brother the Adelantado, and his son Fernando, then in his fourteenth year. He was also permitted to take two or three persons learned in Arabic, to serve as interpreters, in case he should arrive at the dominions of the grand khan, or of any other eastern prince where that language might be

spoken, or partially known. In reply to letters relative to the ultimate restoration of his rights, and to matters concerning his family, the sovereigns wrote him a letter, dated March 14, 1502, from Valencia de Torre, in which they again solemnly assured him that their capitulations with him should be fulfilled to the letter, and the dignities therein ceded should be enjoyed by him, and his children after him; and if it should be necessary to confirm them anew, they would do so, and secure them to his son. Beside which, they expressed their disposition to bestow further honours and rewards upon himself, his brothers, and his children. They entreated him, therefore, to depart in peace and confidence, and to leave all his concerns in Spain to the management of his son Diego*.

This was the last letter that Columbus received from the sovereigns, and the assurances it contained were as ample and absolute as he could desire. Recent circumstances, however, had apparently rendered him dubious of the future. During the time that he passed in Seville, previous to

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind., l. ii., c. 4.

his departure, he took measures to secure his fame, and preserve the claims of his family, by placing them under the guardianship of his na tive country. He had copies of all the letters, grants, and privileges from the sovereigns, appointing him admiral, viceroy, and governor of the Indies, copied and authenticated before the alcaldes of Seville. Two sets of these were transcribed, together with his letter to the nurse of Prince Juan, containing a circumstantial and eloquent vindication of his rights; and two letters to the Bank of St. George's, at Genoa, assigning to it the tenth of his revenues, to be employed in diminishing the duties on corn and other provisions—a truly benevolent and patriotic donation, intended for the relief of the poor of his native city. These two sets of documents he sent by different individuals to his friend, Doctor Nicolo Oderigo, formerly ambassador from Genoa to the court of Spain, requesting him to preserve them in some safe deposit, and to apprize his son Diego of the same. His dissatisfaction at the conduct of the Spanish court may have been the cause of this precautionary measure, that an appeal to the world, or

to posterity, might be in the power of his descendants, in case he should perish in the course of his voyage*.

* These documents lay unknown in the Oderigo family until 1670, when Lorenzo Oderigo presented them to the government of Genoa, and they were deposited in the archives. In the disturbances and revolutions of after times, one of these copies was taken to Paris, and the other disappeared. In 1816 the latter was discovered in the library of the deceased Count Michel Angelo Cambiaso, a senator of Genoa. It was procured by the King of Sardinia, then sovereign of Genoa, and was given up to the city of Genoa by him in 1821. A custodia, or monument, was erected in that city for its preservation, consisting of a marble column supporting an urn, surmounted by a bust of Columbus. The documents were deposited in the urn. These papers have been published, together with an historical memoir of Columbus, by D. Gio. Battista Spotorno, Professor of Eloquence, &c. in the University of Genoa.

BOOK XV.

CHAPTER I.

DEPARTURE OF COLUMBUS ON HIS FOURTH VOYAGE REFUSED ADMISSION TO THE HARBOUR OF SAN DOMINGO. EXPOSED TO A VIOLENT TEMPEST.

[1502.]

On the 9th of May, 1502, Columbus sailed from Cadiz on his fourth and last voyage of discovery. His squadron consisted of four caravels, the largest of but seventy tons burden, the smallest of fifty: the crews amounted in all to one hundred and fifty men. With this little armament, and these slender barks, he undertook the search after a strait, which, if found, must conduct him into the most remote seas, and lead to a complete circumnavigation of the globe. Age was rapidly making its advances upon him, when he undertook this extensive and perilous expedition. He was now about sixty-six years old. His constitution, originally vigorous in the extreme, had been impaired

by hardships and exposures in every clime, and by the mental sufferings he had undergone. His frame, once so powerful and commanding, was crazed by infirmities, yet strong and majestic even in its decay. His intellectual forces alone retained all their wonted energy, prompting him, at a period of life when most men seek repose, to sally forth, with youthful ardour, on the most toilsome and adventurous of enterprises.

In this arduous voyage, however, he had a faithful counsellor, and an intrepid and vigorous coadjutor in his brother Don Bartholomew, whilst his younger son Fernando cheered him with his affectionate sympathy. He had learnt to appreciate such comforts, from being too often an isolated stranger, surrounded by false friends and perfidious enemies.

On leaving Cadiz, the squadron passed over to Ercilla, on the coast of Morocco, where it anchored on the 13th. Understanding that the Portuguese garrison was closely besieged in the fortress by the Moors, and exposed to great peril, the sovereigns had ordered Columbus to touch there, and render all the assistance in his power. On arriving, he

found that the siege had been raised, but that the governor lay ill, having been wounded in an assault. Columbus sent his brother, the Adelantado, his son Fernando, and the captains of the caravels on shore, to wait upon the governor, with expressions of friendship and civility, and offers of the services of his squadron. Their visit and message gave high satisfaction, and several cavaliers were sent to wait upon the admiral in return, some of whom were relatives of his deceased wife, Doña Felippa Muños. After this exchange of civilities, the admiral made sail on the same day, and continued his voyage *. On the 20th of May, he arrived at the Grand Canary, and remained at that and the adjacent islands for a few days, taking in wood and water. On the evening of the 25th, he took his departure for the New World. The trade winds were so favourable, that the little squadron swept gently on its course, without shifting a sail, and arrived on the 15th of June at one of the Caribbee Islands, called by the natives Mantinino †.

* Hist. del Almirante, c. 88.

† Señor Navarrete supposes this island to be the same at present called Santa Lucia. From the distance between it and Dominica, as stated by Fernando Columbus, it was more probably the present Martinica.

After stopping here for three days, to take in wood and water, and allow the seamen time to wash their clothes, the squadron passed to the west of the island, and sailed to Dominica about ten leagues distant. From hence, Columbus continued along the inside of the Antilles, to Santa Cruz, then along the south side of Porto Rico, and steered for San Domingo. This was contrary to the original plan of the admiral, who had intended to steer to Jamaica *, and from thence to take a departure for the continent, to explore its coasts in search of the supposed strait. It was contrary to the orders of the sovereigns also, prohibiting him on his outward voyage to touch at Hispaniola. His excuse was, that his principal vessel sailed extremely ill, could not carry any canvass, and continually embarrassed and delayed the rest of the squadron †. He wished, therefore, to exchange it for one of the fleet which had recently conveyed Ovando to his government, or to purchase some other vessel at San Domingo; and he was persuaded that he would not be blamed

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 88.

† Letter of Columb. from Jamaica. Journal of Porras, Navarrete, t. i.

for departing from his orders, in a case of such importance to the safety and success of his expedition.

It is necessary to state the situation of the island at this moment. Ovando had reached San Domingo on the 15th of April. He had been received with the accustomed ceremony on the shore, by Bobadilla, accompanied by the principal inhabitants of the town. He was escorted to the fortress, where his commission was read in form, in presence of all the authorities. The usual oaths were taken, and ceremonials observed; and the new governor was hailed with great demonstrations of obedience and satisfaction. Ovando entered upon the duties of his office with coolness and prudence; and treated Bobadilla with a courtesy totally opposite to the rudeness with which the latter had superseded Columbus. The emptiness of mere official rank, when unsustained by merit, was shown in the case of Bobadilla. The moment his authority was at an end, all his importance vanished. He found himself a solitary and neglected man, deserted by those whom he had most favoured, and he experienced the worthlessness of

that popularity, which is gained by indulging the bad passions of the multitude. Still there is no record of any suit having been instituted against him; and Las Casas, who was on the spot, declares that he never heard any harsh thing spoken of him by the colonists*.

The conduct of Roldan and his accomplices, however, underwent a strict investigation, and many were arrested to be sent to Spain for trial. They appeared undismayed, however, trusting to the influence of their friends in Spain to protect them, and many relying on the well-known disposition of the bishop Fonseca to favour all who had been in opposition to Columbus.

The fleet which had brought out Ovando, was now ready for sea; and was to take out a number of the principal delinquents, and many of the idlers and profligates of the island. Bobadilla was to embark in the principal ship, on board of which he had put an immense amount of gold, the revenue collected for the crown during his government, and which he confidently expected would atone for all his faults. There was one solid

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind., l. ii., c. 3.

mass of virgin gold on board of this ship, which is famous in the old Spanish chronicles. It had been found by a female Indian in a brook, on the estate of Francisco de Garay and Miguel Diaz, and had been taken by Bobadilla to send to the king, making the owners a suitable compensation. It was said to weigh three thousand six hundred castellanos *.

Large quantities of gold were likewise shipped in the fleet, by the followers of Roldan, and other adventurers; the wealth gained by the sufferings of the unhappy natives. Among the various persons who were to sail in the principal ship, was the unfortunate Guarionex, the once powerful cacique of the Vega. He had been confined in Fort Conception, ever since his capture after the war of Higuey, and was now to be sent a captive in chains to Spain. In one of the ships, Alonzo Sanchez de Carvajal, the agent of Columbus, had put four thousand pieces of gold, to be remitted to him; being part of his property, which had either been recently collected, or recovered from the hands of Bobadilla †. The preparations were all

* Las Casas, cap. 5. † Ib.

made, and the fleet was ready to put to sea, when, on the 29th of June, the squadron of Columbus arrived at the mouth of the river. He immediately sent Pedro de Terreros, captain of one of the caravels, on shore to wait on Ovando, and explain to him that the purpose of his coming was to procure a vessel in exchange for one of his caravels, which was extremely defective. He requested permission also to shelter his squadron in the harbour; as he apprehended, from various indications, an approaching storm. This request was refused by Ovando. Las Casas thinks it probable that he had instructions from the sovereigns not to admit Columbus, and that he was further swayed by prudent considerations,—San Domingo being at that moment crowded with the most virulent enemies of the admiral, many of them in a high state of exasperation, from recent proceedings which had taken place against them*.

When the ungracious refusal of Ovando was brought to Columbus, and he found all shelter denied him, he sought at least to avert the danger of the fleet, which was about to sail. He sent

* Las Casas, ubi sup.

back the officer therefore to the governor, entreating him not to permit the fleet to put to sea for several days; assuring him that there were indubitable signs of an impending tempest. This second request was equally fruitless with the first. The weather, to an inexperienced eye, was fair and tranquil; the pilots and seamen were impatient to depart. They scoffed at the prediction of the admiral, ridiculing him as a false prophet, and they persuaded Ovando not to detain the fleet on so unsubstantial a pretext.

It was hard treatment of Columbus, thus to be denied the relief which the state of his ships required, and to be excluded in time of distress from the very harbour he had discovered. It would almost seem as though his life had been destined to exemplify the ingratitude of mankind. He retired from the river full of grief and indignation. His crew murmured loudly at being shut out from a port of their own nation, where even strangers, under similar circumstances, would be admitted. They repined at having embarked with a commander liable to such treatment; and anticipated nothing but evil from a

voyage, in which they were exposed to the dangers of the sea, and repulsed from the protection of the land.

Being confident, from his observations of those natural phenomena in which he was deeply skilled, that the anticipated storm could not be distant, and expecting it from the land side, Columbus kept his feeble squadron close to the shore, and sought for secure anchorage in some wild bay or river of the island.

In the mean time, the fleet of Bobadilla set sail from San Domingo, and stood out confidently to sea. Within two days, the predictions of Columbus were verified. One of those tremendous hurricanes, which sometimes sweep those latitudes, had gradually gathered up. The baleful appearance of the heavens, the wild look of the ocean, the rising murmur of the winds, all gave notice of its approach. The fleet had scarcely reached the eastern point of Hispaniola, when the tempest burst over it with awful fury, involving every thing in wreck and ruin. The ship on board of which were Bobadilla, Roldan, and a number of the most inveterate enemies of Columbus, was swallowed

up with all its crew, and with the celebrated mass of gold, and the principal part of the ill-gotten treasure, gained by the miseries of the Indians. Many of the ships were entirely lost, some returned to San Domingo in shattered condition, and only one was enabled to continue her voyage to Spain. That one, according to Fernando Columbus, was the weakest of the fleet, and had on board the four thousand pieces of gold, the property of the admiral.

During the early part of this storm, the little squadron of Columbus had remained tolerably well sheltered by the land. On the second day, the tempest increased in violence, and the night coming on with unusual darkness, the ships lost sight of each other, and were separated. The admiral still kept close to the shore, and sustained no damage. The others, fearful of the land in such a dark and boisterous night, ran out for sea-room, and encountered the whole fury of the elements. For several days they were driven about at the mercy of wind and wave, fearful each moment of shipwreck, and giving up each

other as lost. The Adelantado, who commanded that ship, which, as before mentioned, was scarcely sea-worthy, ran the most imminent hazard, and nothing but his consummate seamanship enabled him to keep her afloat. At length, after various vicissitudes, they all arrived safe at Port Hermoso, to the west of San Domingo. The Adelantado had lost his long boat; and all the vessels, with the exception of that of the admiral, had sustained more or less injury. When Columbus learnt the signal destruction that had overwhelmed his enemies, almost before his eyes, he was deeply impressed with awe, and considered his own preservation as little less than miraculous. Both his son Fernando, and the venerable historian Las Casas, looked upon the event as one of those awful judgments, which seem at times to deal forth temporal retribution. They notice the circumstance, that while the enemies of the admiral were swallowed up by the raging sea, the only ship of the fleet which was enabled to pursue her voyage, and reach her port of destination, was the frail bark freighted with the property of Columbus. The evil, how-

ever, in this, as in most circumstances, overwhelmed the innocent as well as the guilty. In the same ship with Bobadilla and Roldan, perished the captive Guarionex, the unfortunate cacique of the Vega*.

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind. l. ii., c. 5. Hist. del. Almirante, cap. 88.

CHAPTER II.

VOYAGE ALONG THE COAST OF HONDURAS.

[1502.]

For several days Columbus remained in Port Hermoso to repair his vessels, and permit his crews to repose and refresh themselves after the late tempest. He had scarcely left this harbour when he was obliged to take shelter from another storm in Jacquemel, or as it was called by the Spaniards, Port Brazil. From hence he sailed on the 14th of July, steering for Terra firma. The weather falling perfectly calm, he was borne away by the currents until he found himself in the vicinity of some little islands near Jamaica *, destitute of springs, but where the seamen obtained a supply of water by digging holes in the sand on the beach.

The calm continuing, he was swept away to the group of small islands, or keys, on the southern

* Supposed to be the Morant Keys.

coast of Cuba, to which, in 1494, he had given the name of The Gardens. He had scarcely touched there, however, when the wind sprang up from a favourable quarter, and he was enabled to make sail on his destined course. He now stood to the south-west, and after a few days he discovered, on the 30th of July, a small but elevated island, agreeable to the eye from the variety of trees with which it was covered. Among these was a great number of lofty pines, from which circumstance Columbus named it Isla de Pinos. It has always, however, retained its Indian name of Guanaga*, which has been extended to a number of smaller islands that surround it. This group is within a few leagues of the coast of Honduras, to the east of the great bay or gulf of that name.

The Adelantado, with two launches full of people, landed on the principal island, which was extremely verdant and fertile. The inhabitants resembled those of other islands, excepting that their foreheads were narrower. While the Adelantado was on shore, he beheld a great canoe arriving as from a distant and important voyage.

* Called in some of the English maps Bonacca.

He was struck with its magnitude and contents. It was eight feet wide, and as long as a galley, though formed of the trunk of a single tree. In the centre was a kind of awning or cabin of palm leaves, after the manner of those in the gondolas of Venice, and sufficiently close to exclude both sun and rain. Under this sat a cacique with his wives and children. Twenty-five Indians rowed the canoe, and it was filled with all kinds of articles of the manufacture and natural production of the adjacent countries. It is supposed that this bark had come from the province of Yucatan, which is about forty leagues distant from this island.

The Indians in the canoe appeared to have no fear of the Spaniards, and readily went alongside of the admiral's caravel. Columbus was overjoyed at thus having brought to him at once, without trouble or danger, a collection of specimens of all the important articles of this part of the New World. He examined, with great curiosity and interest, the contents of the canoe. Among various utensils and weapons similar to those already found among the natives, he perceived others of a much superior kind. There

were hatchets for cutting wood, formed not of stone but copper; wooden swords, with channels on each side of the blade, in which sharp flints were firmly fixed by cords made of the intestines of fishes; being the same kind of sword afterwards found among the Mexicans. There were copper bells, and other articles of the same metal, together with a rude kind of crucible in which to melt it; various vessels and utensils neatly formed of clay, of marble, and of hard wood; sheets and mantles of cotton, worked and dyed with various colours; great quantities of cacao, a fruit as yet unknown to the Spaniards, but which, as they soon found, the natives held in great estimation, using it both as food and money. There was a beverage also extracted from maize or Indian corn, resembling beer. Their provisions consisted of bread made of maize, and roots of various kinds, similar to those of Hispaniola. From among these articles, Columbus collected such as were important to send as specimens to Spain, giving the natives European trinkets in exchange, with which they were highly satisfied. They appeared to manifest neither astonishment nor alarm when on

board of the vessels, and surrounded by people who must have been so strange and wonderful to them. The women wore mantles, with which they wrapped themselves, like the female Moors of Granada, and the men had cloths of cotton around their loins. Both sexes appeared more particular about these coverings, and to have a quicker sense of personal modesty than any Indians that Columbus had yet discovered.

These circumstances, together with the superiority of their implements and manufactures, were held by the admiral as indications that he was approaching more civilized nations. He endeavoured to gain particular information from these Indians about the surrounding countries; but as they spoke a different language from that of his interpreters, he could understand them but imperfectly. They informed him that they had just arrived from a country, rich, cultivated, and industrious, situated to the west. They endeavoured to impress him with an idea of the wealth and magnificence of the regions, and the people in that quarter, and urged him to steer in that direction. Well would it have been for Columbus

had he followed their advice. Within a day or two he would have arrived at Yucatan; the discovery of Mexico and the other opulent countries of New Spain would have necessarily followed; the Southern Ocean would have been disclosed to him, and a succession of splendid discoveries would have shed fresh glory on his declining age, instead of its sinking amidst gloom, neglect, and disappointment.

The admiral's whole mind, however, was at present intent upon discovering the strait. As the countries described by the Indians lay to the west, he supposed that he could easily visit them at some future time, by running with the trade-wind along the coast of Cuba, which he imagined must continue on, so as to join them. At present he was determined to seek the main land, the mountains of which were visible to the south, and apparently not many leagues distant*: by keeping along it steadfastly to the east, he must at length arrive to where he supposed it to be severed from the coast of Paria by an intervening strait; and passing through this, he should soon make

* Journal of Porras, Navarrete, t. i.

his way to the Spice Islands and the richest parts of India*.

He was encouraged the more to persist in his eastern course by information from the Indians, that there were many places in that direction which abounded with gold. Much of the information which he gathered among these people, was derived from an old man who was more intelligent than the rest, and appeared to be an ancient navigator of these seas. Columbus retained him to serve as a guide along the coast, and dismissed his companions with many presents.

Leaving the island of Guanaga, he stood southwardly for the main land, and after sailing a few leagues, discovered a cape, to which he gave the name of Caxinas, from its being covered with fruit trees, so called by the natives. It is at present known as Cape Honduras. Here, on Sunday the 14th of August, the Adelantado landed with the captains of the caravels and many of the seamen, to attend mass, which was solemnly performed under the trees on the sea-shore, according to the pious custom of the admiral, whenever

* Las Casas, l. ii., c. 20. Letter of Columbus from Jamaica.

circumstances would permit. On the 17th, the Adelantado again landed at a river about fifteen miles from the point, on the bank of which he displayed the banners of Castile, taking possession of the country in the name of their Catholic Majesties; from which circumstances he named this the River of Possession*.

At this place they found upwards of a hundred Indians assembled, laden with bread and maize, fish and fowl, vegetables, and fruits of various kinds. These they laid down as presents before the Adelantado and his party, and drew back to a distance without speaking a word. The Adelantado commanded that there should be distributed among them various trinkets, with which they were well pleased, and appeared the next day in the same place, in greater numbers, with still more abundant supplies of provisions.

The natives of this neighbourhood, and for a considerable distance eastward, had higher foreheads than those of the islands. They were of different languages, and varied from each other in their decorations. Some were entirely naked;

* Journal of Porras, Navarrete Collec., t. i.

their bodies marked by means of fire with the figures of various animals. Some wore coverings about the loins; others short cotton jerkins without sleeves: some wore tresses of hair in front. The chieftains had caps of white or coloured cotton. When arrayed for any festival, they painted their faces black, or with stripes of various colours, or with circles round the eyes. The old Indian guide assured the admiral that many of them were cannibals. In one part of the coast the natives had their ears bored, and hideously distended; which caused the Spaniards to call that region *la Costa de la Oreja*, or "the Coast of the Ear*."

From the River of Possession, Columbus proceeded along what is at present called the coast of Honduras, beating against contrary winds and struggling with currents, which swept from the east like the constant stream of a river. He often lost in one tack what he had laboriously gained in two, frequently making but two leagues in a day, and never more than five. At night he anchored under the land, through fear of proceeding along

* Las Casas, lib. ii., c. 21. Hist. del Almirante, cap. 90.

an unknown coast in the dark, but was often forced out to sea by the violence of the currents*. In all this time he experienced the same kind of weather that had prevailed on the coast of Hispaniola, and had attended him more or less for upwards of sixty days. There was, he says, almost an incessant tempest of the heavens, with heavy rains, and such thunder and lightning, that it seemed as if the end of the world was at hand. Those who know any thing of the drenching rains, and the rending thunder of the tropics, will not think his description of the storms he endured exaggerated. His vessels were strained so that their seams opened; the sails and rigging were rent, and the provisions were damaged by the rain and by the leakage. The sailors were exhausted with labour, and harassed with terror. They many times confessed their sins to each other, and prepared for death. "I have seen many tempests," says Columbus, "but none so violent or of such long duration." He alludes to the whole series of storms which he had experienced for upwards of two months, since he had been refused shelter at

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 91.

San Domingo. During a great part of this time, he had suffered extremely from the gout, aggravated by his watchfulness and anxiety. His illness did not prevent his attending to his duties; he had a small cabin or chamber constructed on the stern, from whence, even when confined to his bed, he could keep a look out and regulate the sailing of the ships. Many times he was so ill that he thought his end approaching. His anxious mind was distressed about his brother the Adelantado, whom he had persuaded against his will to come on this expedition, and who was in the worst vessel of the squadron. He lamented also having brought with him his son Fernando, exposing him at so tender an age to such perils and hardships, although the youth bore them with the courage and fortitude of a veteran. Often, too, his thoughts reverted to his son Diego, and the cares and perplexities into which his death might plunge him *. At length, after struggling for upwards of forty days since leaving the Cape of Honduras, to make a distance of about seventy leagues, they arrived on the 14th of September at a cape where the

* Letter from Jamaica. Naverrete collec. t. 1.

coast making an angle, turned directly south, so as to give them an easy wind and free navigation. Doubling the point, they swept off with flowing sails and hearts filled with joy; and the admiral, to commemorate this sudden relief from toil and peril, gave to the Cape the name of *Gracias a Dios*, or Thanks to God *.

* Las Casas, l. ii. c. 21. Hist. del Almirante, c. 91.

CHAPTER III.

VOYAGE ALONG THE MOSQUITO COAST, AND TRANSACTIONS AT CARIARI.

[1503.]

After doubling Cape Gracias a Dios, Columbus sailed directly south, along what is at present called the Mosquito shore. The land was of varied character, sometimes rugged, with craggy promontories and points stretching into the sea, at other places verdant and fertile, and watered by abundant streams. In the rivers grew immense reeds, sometimes of the thickness of a man's thigh: they abounded with fish and tortoises, and alligators were seen basking on the banks. At one place Columbus passed a cluster of twelve small islands, near the coast of which grew a fruit resembling the lemon, on which account he called them the Limonares*.

After sailing about sixty-two leagues along this

* P. Martyr, decad. 3, l. iv. These may have been the lime, a small and extremely acid species of the lemon.

coast, being greatly in want of wood and water, the squadron anchored, on the 16th of September, near a copious river, up which the boats were sent to procure the requisite supplies. As they were returning to the ships there was a sudden swelling of the sea, which, rushing in and encountering the rapid current of the river, caused a violent commotion, in which one of the boats was swallowed up, and all on board perished. This melancholy event had a gloomy effect upon the crews, already dispirited and care-worn from the hardships they had endured, and Columbus, sharing their dejection, gave the stream the sinister name of *El rio del Desastre*, or the River of Disaster *.

Leaving this unlucky neighbourhood, they continued for several days along the coast, until finding both his ships and his people nearly disabled by the buffetings of the tempests they had experienced, Columbus, on the 25th of September, cast anchor between a small island and the main land, in what appeared to be a most commodious and delightful situation. The island was covered with groves of palm trees, cocoa-nut trees, bananas, and

* Las Casas, l. ii., c. 21. Hist. del Almirante, c. 91. Journal of Porras.

a delicate and fragrant fruit which the admiral continually mistook for the mirabolane of the East Indies. The fruits and flowers, and odoriferous shrubs of the island sent forth the most grateful perfumes, so that Columbus gave it the name of La Huerta, or The Garden. It was called by the natives Quiribiri. Immediately opposite, at a short league's distance, was an Indian village, named Cariari, situated on the bank of a beautiful river. The country around was fresh and verdant, finely diversified by noble hills and forests, with trees of such height, that Las Casas says they appeared to reach the skies.

When the inhabitants beheld the ships, they gathered together on the coast, armed with bows and arrows, war-clubs, and lances, and prepared to defend their shores. The Spaniards, however, made no attempt to land during that or the succeeding day, but remained quietly on board repairing the ships, airing and drying the damaged provisions, or reposing from the fatigues of the voyage. When the savages perceived that these wonderful beings, who had arrived in this strange manner on their coast, were perfectly pacific, and made no

movement to molest them, their hostility ceased, and curiosity began to predominate. They made various pacific signals, waving their mantles like banners, and inviting the Spaniards to land. Growing still more bold, they swam to the ships, bringing off mantles and tunics of cotton, and ornaments of the inferior sort of gold, called guanin, which they wore about their necks. These they offered to the Spaniards. The admiral, however, forbade all traffic, making them presents, but taking nothing in exchange, wishing to impress them with a favourable idea of the liberality and disinterestedness of the white men. The pride of the savages was touched at the refusal of their proffered gifts, and this supposed contempt for their manufactures and productions. They endeavoured to retaliate, by pretending like indifference. On returning to shore they tied together all the European articles which had been given them, without retaining the least trifle, and left them lying on the strand, where the Spaniards found them on a subsequent day.

Finding that the strangers still declined to come on shore, the natives tried in every way to gain

their confidence, and to dispel the distrust which their hostile demonstrations might have caused. A boat approaching the shore cautiously one day, in quest of some safe place to procure water, an ancient Indian, of venerable demeanour, issued from among the trees, bearing a white banner on the end of a staff, in signal of peace, and leading two girls, one about fourteen years of age, the other about eight, having jewels of guanin about their necks. These he brought to the boat and delivered to the Spaniards, making signs that they were to be detained as hostages while the strangers should be on shore. Upon this the Spaniards sallied forth with confidence and filled their water-casks, the Indians remaining at a distance, and observing the strictest care, neither by word nor movement to cause any new distrust. When the boats were about to return to the ships, the old Indian made signs that the young girls should be taken on board, nor would he admit of any denial. On entering the ships the girls shewed no signs of grief or alarm, though surrounded by what to them must have been such uncouth and formidable beings. Columbus was careful that the confidence

thus placed in him should not be abused. After feasting the young females, and ordering them to be clothed and adorned with various ornaments, he sent them on shore. The night, however, had fallen, and the coast was deserted. They had to return to the ship, where they remained all night under the careful protection of the admiral. The next morning he restored them to their friends. The old Indian received them with joy, and manifested a grateful sense of the kind treatment they had experienced. In the evening, however, when the boats went on shore, the young girls appeared, accompanied by a multitude of their friends, and returned all the presents they had received, nor could they be prevailed upon to retain any of them, although they must have been precious in their eyes, so greatly was the pride of these savages piqued at having their gifts refused.

On the following day, as the Adelantado approached the shore, two of the principal inhabitants, entering the water, took him out of the boat in their arms, and carrying him to land, seated him with great ceremony on a grassy bank. Don Bartholomew endeavoured to collect information

from them respecting the country, and ordered the notary of the squadron to write down their replies. The latter immediately prepared pen, ink, and paper, and proceeded to write; but no sooner did the Indians behold this strange and mysterious process, than, mistaking it for some necromantic spell, intended to be wrought upon them, they fled with terror. After some time they returned, cautiously scattering a fragrant powder in the air, and burning some of it in such a direction, that the smoke should be borne towards the Spaniards by the wind. This was apparently intended to counteract any baleful spell, for they regarded the strangers as beings of a mysterious and supernatural order.

The sailors looked upon these counter-charms of the Indians with equal distrust, and apprehended something of magic; nay, Fernando Columbus, who was present, and records the scene, appears to doubt whether these Indians were not versed in sorcery, and thus led to suspect it in others *.

Indeed, not to conceal a foible, which was more characteristic of the superstition of the age than

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 91.

of the man, Columbus himself entertained an idea of the kind, and assures the sovereigns, in his letter from Jamaica, that the people of Cariari and its vicinity are great enchanters, and he intimates that the two Indian girls who had visited his ship had magic powder concealed about their persons. He adds that the sailors attributed all the delays and hardships which they experienced on that coast to their being under the influence of some evil spell, worked by the witchcraft of the natives, and that they still remained in that belief*.

For several days the squadron remained at this place, during which time the ships were examined and repaired, and the crews enjoyed repose and the recreation of the land. The Adelantado, with a band of armed men, made excursions on shore to collect information. There was no pure gold to be met with here, all their ornaments were of guanin; but the natives assured the Adelantado, that, in proceeding along the coast, the ships would soon arrive at a country where gold was in great abundance.

In examining one of the villages, the Adelan-

* Letter from Jamaica.

tado found, in a large house, several sepulchres. One contained a human body embalmed: in another, there were two bodies wrapped in cotton, and so preserved as to be free from any diagreeable odour. They were adorned with the ornaments which had been most precious to them when living; and the sepulchres were decorated with rude carvings and paintings representing various animals, and, sometimes, what appeared to be intended for portraits of the deceased *. Throughout most of the savage tribes, there appears to have been great veneration for the dead, and an anxiety to preserve their remains undisturbed.

When about to sail, Columbus seized seven of the people, two of whom, apparently the most intelligent, he selected to serve as guides; the rest he suffered to depart. His late guide he had dismissed with presents at Cape Gracias a Dios. The inhabitants of Cariari manifested unusual sensibility at this seizure of their countrymen. They thronged the shore, and sent off four of their principal men with presents to the ships, imploring the release of the prisoners.

* Las Casas, l. ii., c. 21. Hist. del Almirante, cap. 91.

The admiral assured them that he only took their companions as guides, for a short distance along the coast, and would restore them soon in safety to their homes. He ordered various presents to be given to the ambassadors; but neither his promises nor gifts could soothe the grief and apprehension of the natives, at beholding their friends carried away by beings of whom they had such mysterious apprehensions *.

* Las Casas, l. ii., c. 21. Hist. del Almirante, c. 91. Letter of Columbus from Jamaica.

CHAPTER IV.

VOYAGE ALONG COSTA RICA. SPECULATIONS CONCERNING THE ISTHMUS AT VERAGUA.

[1502.]

On the 5th of October, the squadron departed from Cariari, and sailed along what is at present called Costa Rica (or the Rich Coast), from the gold and silver mines found in after years among its mountains. After sailing about twenty-two leagues, the ships anchored in a great bay, about six leagues in length and three in breadth, full of islands, with channels opening between them, so as to present three or four entrances. This bay was called by the natives Caribaro *, and had been pointed out by the natives of Cariari as plentiful in gold.

The islands were beautifully verdant, and covered with groves which sent forth the fragrance of fruits and flowers. The channels between them

* In some English maps this bay is called Almirante, or Carnabaco Bay, The channel by which Columbus entered is still called Boca del Almirante, or the Mouth of the Admiral.

were so deep and free from rocks, that the ships sailed along them, as if they had been canals in the streets of a city, the spars and rigging brushing the over-hanging branches of the trees. After anchoring, the boats landed on one of the islands, where they found twenty canoes. The people were on shore among the trees. Being encouraged by the Indians of Cariari, who accompanied the Spaniards, they soon advanced with confidence. Here, for the first time on this coast, the Spaniards met with specimens of pure gold*. The natives had large plates of it suspended round their necks by cotton cords; they had ornaments likewise of guanin, rudely shaped like eagles. One of them exchanged a plate of gold, equal in value to ten ducats, for three hawks'-bells.

On the following day, the boats proceeded to the main land at the bottom of the bay. The country around was high and rough, and the villages were generally perched on the heights. They met with ten canoes of Indians, their heads decorated with garlands of flowers, and coronets formed of the claws of beasts and the quills of

* Journal of Porras, Navarette, t. i.

birds*; most of them had plates of gold about their necks, but refused to part with them. The Spaniards brought two of them to the admiral to serve as guides. One had a plate of pure gold worth fourteen ducats, another an eagle worth twenty-two ducats. Seeing the great value which the strangers set upon this metal, they assured them it was to be had in abundance within the distance of two days' journey; and mentioned various places along the coast, from whence it was procured, particularly Veragua, which was about twenty-five leagues distant†.

The cupidity of the Spaniards was greatly excited by the sight of the gold, which seemed so plentiful among these Indians. They would gladly have remained to barter, but the admiral discouraged all disposition of the kind. He barely sought to collect specimens and information of the riches of the country, and then pressed forward in quest of the great object of his enterprise, the imaginary strait.

Sailing on the 17th of October, from this bay,

* P. Martyr, decad. 3, l. iv.

† Columbus's Letter from Jamaica.

or rather gulf, he began to coast this region of reputed wealth, since called the Coast of Veragua; and after sailing about twelve leagues, arrived at a large river, which his son Fernando calls the Guaig. Here, on the boats being sent to land, about two hundred Indians appeared on the shore, armed with clubs, lances, and swords of palm wood. The forests echoed with the sound of wooden drums, and the blasts of conch shells, their usual war signals. They rushed into the sea up to their waists, brandishing their weapons, and splashed the water at the Spaniards in token of defiance. They were soon pacified by gentle signs, and by the intervention of the interpreters; and willingly exchanged their ornaments with the Spaniards, giving seventeen plates of gold, worth one hundred and fifty ducats, for a few toys and trifles.

When the Spaniards returned the next day to renew their traffic, they found the Indians relapsed into their hostility, sounding their drums and shells, and rushing forward to attack the boats. An arrow from a cross-bow, which wounded one of them in the arm, checked their fury, but on the discharge of a cannon, they fled with terror,

thinking the thunder of the heavens was falling upon them. Four of the Spaniards sprang on shore, pursuing and calling after them. They threw down their weapons, and came, awe struck and gentle as lambs, towards the strangers, bringing three plates of gold, and meekly and thankfully receiving whatever was given to them in exchange.

Continuing along the coast, the admiral anchored in the mouth of another river called the Catiba. Here likewise a warlike alarm attended their arrival, and the sound of drums and conchs from among the forests, gave notice that the warriors were assembling. A canoe shortly after came off with two Indians to demand who were these strange people, that had come upon their coast, and what they wanted. After exchanging a few words with the interpreters, they entered the admiral's ship with fearless confidence, and being satisfied of the friendly intentions of the strangers, returned to their cacique with a favourable report. The boats landed, and the Spaniards were kindly received by the cacique. He was naked like his subjects, nor was he distinguished in any way from them, except by the great

deference with which he was treated, and by a trifling attention paid to his personal comfort, being protected by an immense leaf from a shower of rain that was falling. He had a large plate of gold, which he readily gave in exchange, and permitted his people to do the same. Nineteen plates of pure gold were procured at this place. Here, for the first time in the New World, the Spaniards met with signs of solid architecture, finding a great mass of stucco, formed of stone and lime, a piece of which was retained by the admiral as a specimen *, considering it an indication of his approach to countries where the arts were in a higher state of cultivation.

He had intended to visit other rivers along this coast, but the wind coming on to blow freshly, he ran before it, passing in sight of five towns, where his interpreters assured him he might procure great quantities of gold. One they pointed out as Veragua, which has since given its name to the whole province. Here, they said, were the richest mines, and here most of the plates of gold were fabricated. On the following day, they

* Hist. del. Almirante, cap. 92.

arrived opposite a village called Cubiga, and here Columbus was informed that the country of gold terminated *. He resolved not to return to explore it, considering it as discovered, and its mines secured to the crown, and being anxious to arrive at the supposed strait which he flattered himself could be at no great distance.

In fact, during his whole voyage along the coast, Columbus had been under the influence of one of his frequent delusions. From the Indians whom he had met with at the island of Guanaja, and who had just arrived from Yucatan, he had received accounts of some great, and, as far as he could understand, civilized nation in the interior. This intimation had been corroborated, as he imagined, by the various tribes with which he had since communicated. In a letter which he subsequently wrote to the sovereigns, he informs them that all the Indians of this coast concurred in extolling the magnificence of the country of Ciguare, situated at ten days journey, by land, to the west. The people of that region wore crowns, and bracelets, and anklets of gold, and garments embroidered

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 92.

with it. They used it for all their domestic purposes, even to the ornamenting and embossing of their seats and tables. On being shown coral, the Indians declared that the women of Ciguare wore bands of it about their heads and necks. Pepper and other spices being shown them, were equally said to abound there. They described it as a country of commerce, with great fairs and sea ports, in which ships arrived armed with cannon. The people were warlike also, armed like the Spaniards with swords, bucklers, cuirasses, and cross-bows, and they were mounted on horses. Above all, Columbus understood from them that the sea continued round to Ciguare, and that ten days beyond it was the Ganges.

These may have been vague and wandering rumours concerning the distant kingdoms of Mexico and Peru, and many of the details may have been filled up by the imagination of Columbus. They made, however, a strong impression on his mind. He supposed that Ciguare must be some province belonging to the grand khan, or some other eastern potentate, and as the sea reached it, he concluded it was on the opposite side of a peninsula: bearing

the same position with respect to Veragua that Fontarabia does with Tortosa in Spain, or Pisa with Venice in Italy. By proceeding further eastward, therefore, he must soon arrive at a strait, like that of Gibraltar, through which he could pass into another sea, and visit this country of Ciguare, and, of course, arrive at the banks of the Ganges. He accounted for the circumstance of his having arrived so near to that river, by the idea which he had long entertained, that geographers were mistaken as to the circumference of the globe; that it was smaller than was generally imagined, and that a degree of the equinoctial line was but fifty-six miles and two-thirds *.

With these ideas Columbus determined to press forward, leaving the rich country of Veragua unexplored. Nothing could evince more clearly his generous ambition, than hurrying in this brief manner along a coast where wealth was to be gathered at every step, for the purpose of seeking a strait which, however it might produce vast benefit to mankind, could yield little else to himself than the glory of the discovery.

* Letter of Columbus from Jamaica. Navarrete Collec., t. i.

CHAPTER V.

DISCOVERY OF PUERTO BELLO AND EL RETRETE. COLUMBUS ABANDONS THE SEARCH AFTER THE STRAIT.

[1502.]

On the 2d of November, the squadron anchored in a spacious and commodious harbour, where the vessels could approach close to the shore without danger. It was surrounded by an elevated and beautiful country; not covered with thick forests, but open and cultivated, with houses within bow-shot of each other, surrounded by fruit-trees, groves of palms, and fields producing maize, vegetables, and the delicious pine apple, so that the whole neighbourhood had the mingled appearance of orchard and garden. Columbus was so pleased with the excellence of the harbour, and the sweetness of the surrounding country, that he gave it the name of Puerto Bello*. It is one of the few places along this coast which retain the appellation given by the illustrious discoverer. It is to be

* Las Casas, l. ii. c. 23. Hist. del Almirante.

regretted that they have so generally been discontinued, as they were so often records of his feelings, and of circumstances which attended the discovery.

For seven days they were detained in this port by heavy rain and stormy weather. The natives repaired from all quarters in their canoes, bringing fruits and vegetables and balls of cotton, but there was no longer gold offered in traffic. The cacique, and seven of his principal chieftains, had small plates of gold hanging in their noses, but the rest of the natives appear to have been destitute of all ornaments of the kind. They were generally naked and painted red; the cacique alone was painted black*.

Sailing hence on the 9th of November, they proceeded eight leagues to the eastward, to the point since known as Nombre de Dios; but being driven back for some distance, they anchored in a harbour in the vicinity of three small islands. These, with the adjacent country of the main land, were cultivated with fields of Indian corn, and various fruits and vegetables, from whence Columbus called the harbour Puerto de Bastimentos,

* P. Martyr, decad. 3, l. iv.

or Port of Provisions. Here they remained until the 23rd, endeavouring to repair their vessels, which leaked excessively. They were pierced in all parts by the teredo which abounds in the tropical seas. They are of the size of a man's finger, and bore through the stoutest planks and timbers, and soon destroy any vessels that are not well coppered. After leaving this port, they touched at another called Guiga, where above three hundred of the natives appeared on the shore, some with provisions, and some with golden ornaments, which they offered in barter. Without making any stay, however, the admiral urged his way forward; but rough and adverse winds again obliged him to take shelter in a small port, with a narrow entrance, not above twenty paces wide, beset on each side with reefs of rocks, the points of which rose above the surface. Within, there was not room for more than five or six ships; yet the port was so deep, that they had no good anchorage, unless they approached near enough to the land for a man to leap on shore.

From the smallness of the harbour, Columbus

gave it the name of *El Retrete,* or The Cabinet. He had been betrayed into this inconvenient and dangerous port by the misrepresentations of the seamen sent to examine it, who were always glad to come to anchor, and have communication with the shore*.

The adjacent country was level and verdant, covered with herbage, but with few trees. The port was infested with alligators, which basked in the sunshine on the beach, filling the air with a powerful and musky odour. They were timorous, and fled on being attacked, but the Indians affirmed that if they found a man sleeping on the shore they would seize and drag him into the water. These alligators Columbus pronounced to be the same as the crocodiles of the Nile. For nine days the squadron was detained in this port, by tempestuous weather. The natives of this place were tall, well proportioned, and graceful; they were of gentle and friendly manners, and brought whatever they possessed to exchange for European trinkets.

As long as the admiral had control over the

* Las Casas, l. ii., cap. 23. Hist. del Almirante, cap. 92.

actions of his people, the Indians were treated with justice and kindness, and every thing went on amicably. The vicinity of the ships to land, however, enabled the seamen to get on shore in the night without license. The natives received them in their dwellings with their accustomed hospitality; but the rough adventurers, instigated by avarice and lust, soon committed excesses that roused their generous hosts to revenge. Every night there were brawls and fights on shore, and blood was shed on both sides. The number of the Indians daily augmented by arrivals from the interior. They became more powerful and daring as they became more exasperated; and seeing that the vessels lay close to the shore, approached in a great multitude to attack them.

The admiral thought at first to disperse them by discharging cannon without ball, but they were not intimidated by the sound, regarding it as a kind of harmless thunder. They replied to it by yells and howlings, beating their lances and clubs against the trees and bushes in furious menace. The situation of the ships so close to the shore exposed them to assaults, and made the hostility

of the natives unusually formidable. Columbus ordered a shot or two, therefore, to be discharged among them. When they saw the havoc made by this tremendous artillery, they fled in terror, and offered no further hostility *.

The continuance of stormy winds from the east and the north-east, in addition to the constant opposition of the currents, disheartened the companions of Columbus, and they began to murmur against any further prosecution of the voyage. The seamen thought that some hostile spell was operating, and the commanders remonstrated against attempting to force their way in spite of the elements, with ships crazed and worm-eaten, and continually in need of repair. Few of his companions could sympathize with Columbus in his zeal for mere discovery. They were actuated by more gainful motives, and looked back with regret on the rich coast they had left behind, to go in search of an imaginary strait. It is probable that Columbus himself began to doubt the object of his enterprise. If he knew the details of the recent voyage of Bastides, he must have been aware that

* Las Casas, l. ii., cap. 23. Hist. del Almirante, cap. 92.

he had arrived from an opposite quarter to about the place where that navigator's exploring voyage from the east had terminated; consequently that there was but little probability of the existence of the strait he had imagined *.

At all events he determined to relinquish the further prosecution of his voyage eastward for the present, and to return to the coast of Veragua, to search for those mines of which he had heard so much, and seen so many indications. Should they prove equal to his hopes, he would have wherewithal to return to Spain in triumph, and silence the reproaches of his enemies, even though he should fail in the leading object of his expedition.

Here, then, ended the lofty anticipations which

* It appears to me doubtful whether Columbus was acquainted with the exact particulars of that voyage, as they could scarcely have reached Spain previously to his sailing. Bastides had been seized in Hispaniola by Bobadilla, and was on board of that very fleet which was wrecked at the time that Columbus arrived off San Domingo. He escaped the fate that attended most of his companions, and returned to Spain, where he was rewarded by the sovereigns for his enterprise. Though some of his seamen had reached Spain previous to the sailing of Columbus, and had given a general idea of the voyage, it is doubtful whether he had transmitted his papers and charts. Porras, in his journal of the voyage of Columbus, states that they arrived at the place where the discoveries of Bastides terminated; but this information he may have obtained subsequently at San Domingo.

had elevated Columbus above all mercenary interests; which had made him regardless of hardships and perils, and had given an heroic character to the early part of this voyage. It is true, he had been in pursuit of a mere chimera, but it was the chimera of a splendid imagination, and a penetrating judgment. If he was disappointed in his expectation of finding a strait through the Isthmus of Darien, it was because nature herself had been disappointed, for she appears to have attempted to make one, but to have attempted it in vain.

CHAPTER VI.

RETURN TO VERAGUA. THE ADELANTADO EXPLORES THE COUNTRY.

[1502.]

On the 5th of December, Columbus sailed from El Retrete, and relinquishing his course to the east, returned westward, in search of the gold mines of Veragua. On the same evening he anchored in Puerto Bello, about ten leagues distant; from whence departing on the succeeding day, the wind suddenly veered to the west, and began to blow directly adverse to the new course he had adopted. For three months he had been longing in vain for such a wind, and now it came merely to contradict him. Here was a temptation to resume his route to the east, but he did not dare to trust to the continuance of the wind, which, in these parts, appeared but seldom to blow from that quarter. He resolved, therefore, to keep on in the present direction, trusting that the breeze would soon change again to the eastward.

In a little while the wind began to blow with dreadful violence, and to shift about, in such a manner as to baffle all seamanship. Unable to reach Veragua, the ships were obliged to put back to Puerto Bello, and when they would have entered that harbour, a sudden veering of the gale drove them from the land. For nine days they were blown and tossed about, at the mercy of a furious tempest, in an unknown sea, and often exposed to the awful perils of a lee-shore. It is wonderful that such open vessels, so crazed and decayed, could outlive such a commotion of the elements. No where is a storm so awful as between the tropics. The sea, according to the description of Columbus, boiled at times like a cauldron; at other times it ran in mountain waves, covered with foam. At night the raging billows resembled great surges of flame, owing to those luminous particles which cover the surface of the water in these seas, and throughout the whole course of the gulf stream. For one day and night the heavens glowed as a furnace with the incessant flashes of lightning; while the loud claps of thunder were often mistaken by the affrighted

mariners for signal guns of distress from their foundering companions. During the whole time, says Columbus, it poured down from the skies, not rain, but as it were a second deluge. The seamen were almost drowned in their open vessels. Haggard with toil and affright, some gave themselves over for lost; they confessed their sins to each other according to the rites of the Catholic religion, and prepared themselves for death; many, in their desperation, called upon death as a welcome relief from such overwhelming horrors.

In the midst of this wild tumult of the elements, they beheld a new object of alarm. The ocean in one place became strangely agitated. The water was whirled up into a kind of pyramid or cone, while a livid cloud, tapering to a point, bent down to meet it. Joining together, they formed a vast column, which rapidly approached the ships, spinning along the surface of the deep, and drawing up the waters with a rushing sound. The affrighted mariners, when they beheld this waterspout advancing towards them, despaired of all human means to avert it, and began to repeat passages from St. John the evangelist. The water-

spout passed close by the ships without injuring them, and the trembling mariners attributed their escape to the miraculous efficacy of their quotations from the Scriptures*.

In this same night, they lost sight of one of the caravels, and for three dark and stormy days they gave it up for lost. At length, to their great relief, it rejoined the squadron, having lost its boat, and been obliged to cut its cable, in an attempt to anchor on a boisterous coast, and having since been driven to and fro by the storm. For one or two days, there was an interval of calm, and the tempest-tost mariners had time to breathe. They looked upon this tranquillity, however, as deceitful, and, in their gloomy mood, beheld every thing with a doubtful and foreboding eye. Great numbers of sharks, so abundant and ravenous in these latitudes, were seen about the ships. This was construed into an evil omen; for among the superstitions of the seas, it is believed that these voracious fish can smell dead bodies at a distance; that they have a kind of presentiment of their prey; and keep about vessels which have sick

* Las Casas, l. ii., cap. 24. Hist. del Almirante, cap. 94.

persons on board, or which are in danger of being wrecked. Several of these fish they caught, using large hooks fastened to chains, and sometimes baited merely with a piece of coloured cloth. From the maw of one they took out a living tortoise; from that of another the head of a shark, recently thrown from one of the ships. Such is the indiscriminate voracity of these terrors of the ocean. Notwithstanding their superstitious fancies, the seamen were glad to use a part of these sharks for food, being very short of provisions. The length of the voyage had consumed the greater part of their sea stores; the heat and humidity of the climate, and the leakage of the ships, had damaged the remainder, and their biscuit was so filled with worms, that, notwithstanding their hunger, they were obliged to eat it in the dark, lest their stomachs should revolt at its appearance*.

At length, on the 17th, they were enabled to enter a port resembling a great canal, where they enjoyed three days of repose. The natives of this vicinity built their cabins in trees, on stakes or poles laid from one branch to another. The

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 94.

Spaniards supposed this to be through the fear of wild beasts, or of surprisals from neighbouring tribes; the different nations of these coasts being extremely hostile to one another. It may have been a precaution against inundations caused by floods from the mountains. After leaving this port, they were driven backwards and forwards, by the changeable and tempestuous winds, until the day after Christmas; when they sheltered themselves in another port, where they remained until the 3rd of January, 1503, repairing one of the caravels, and procuring wood, water, and a supply of maize or Indian corn. These measures being completed, they again put to sea, and on the day of Epiphany, to their great joy, anchored at the mouth of a river called by the natives Yebra, within a league or two of the river Veragua, and in the country said to be so rich in mines. To this river, from arriving at it on the day of Epiphany, Columbus gave the name of Belen or Bethlehem.

For nearly a month he had endeavoured to accomplish the voyage from Porto Bello to Veragua, a distance of about thirty leagues; and had encountered so many troubles and adversities, from

changeable winds and currents, and boisterous tempests, that he gave this intermediate line of sea-bord the name of *La Costa de los Contrastes,* or The Coast of Contradictions *.

Columbus immediately ordered the mouths of the Belen, and of its neighbouring river of Veragua, to be sounded. The latter was found to be too shallow to admit his vessels, but the Belen was somewhat deeper, and it was thought they might enter it with safety. Seeing a village on the banks of the Belen, the admiral sent the boats on shore to procure information. On their approach, the inhabitants issued forth with weapons in hand to oppose their landing, but were readily pacified. They seemed unwilling to give any intelligence about the gold mines; but, on being importuned, declared that they lay in the vicinity of the river of Veragua. To that river the boats were despatched on the following day. They met with the reception so frequent along this coast, where many of the tribes were fierce and warlike, and are supposed by some to have been of Carib origin. As the boats entered the river, the natives sallied forth in their canoes, and others assembled on the

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 94.

shores, menacing a jealous defence of their territory. The Spaniards, however, had brought with them an Indian of that coast, who, by his mediation, put an end to this show of hostility, assuring his countrymen that the strangers came only to traffic with them.

The various accounts of the riches of these parts appeared to be confirmed by what the Spaniards saw and heard among these people. They procured in exchange for the veriest trifles twenty plates of gold, with several pipes of the same metal, and crude masses of ore. The Indians informed them that the mines lay among distant mountains; and that when they went in quest of it they were obliged to practice rigorous fasting and continence*. The favourable report brought by the boats determined the admiral to remain in the neighbourhood. The river Belen having the greatest depth, two of the caravels entered it on

* A superstitious notion with respect to gold appears to have been very prevalent among the natives. The Indians of Hispaniola observed the same privations when they sought for it, abstaining from food and from sexual intercourse. Columbus, who seemed to look upon gold as one of the sacred and mystic treasures of the earth, wished to encourage similar observances among the Spaniards; exhorting them to purify themselves for the research of the mines by fasting, prayer, and chastity. It is scarcely necessary to add, that his advice was but little attended to by his rapacious and sensual followers.

the 9th of January, and the two others on the following day at high tide, which on that coast does not rise above half a fathom *. The natives came to them in the most friendly manner, bringing them great quantities of fish, with which that river abounded to an extraordinary degree. They brought also various golden ornaments to traffic; but they continued to affirm that Veragua was the place from whence the ore was procured.

The Adelantado, with his usual activity and enterprise, set off on the third day, with the boats well armed, to ascend the Veragua about a league and a half, to the residence of the principal cacique, whose name was Quibian. The chieftain, hearing of his intention, descended the river, attended by his subjects, in several canoes, and met the boats near the entrance of the river. He was of a tall and powerful frame, and a warlike demeanour: the interview was extremely amicable. The cacique presented the Adelantado with the golden ornaments which he wore, and received as magnificent presents a few European trinkets. They parted mutually well pleased. On

* Hist. del Almirante, c. 95.

the following day Quibian visited the ships, where he was hospitably entertained by the admiral. They could only communicate by signs, and as the chieftain was of a taciturn and cautious character, the interview was not of long duration. Columbus made him several presents: the followers of the cacique exchanged many jewels of gold for the usual trifles, and Quibian returned, without much ceremony, to his home.

The sailors had congratulated themselves on being safely sheltered from the tempests and troubles of the sea, but they were near being wrecked in port. On the 24th of January, there was a sudden swelling of the river. The waters came rushing from the interior like a vast torrent; the ships were forced from their anchors, tossed from side to side, and driven against each other; the foremast of the admiral's vessel was carried away in the shock, and the whole squadron was in imminent danger of shipwreck. While there was this peril in the river, they were prevented from running out to sea by a storm which raged without, and by the breakers which beat upon the bar. This sudden rising of the river, Columbus attri-

buted to some heavy fall of rain among a range of mountains seen at a distance, the highest of which rose to a peak far above the clouds, and to which he had given the name of the mountains of San Christoval *.

The weather continued extremely boisterous for several days. At length, on the 6th of February, the sea being tolerably calm, the Adelantado, attended by sixty-eight men well armed, proceeded in the boats to explore the Veragua, and seek its reputed mines. When he ascended the river and drew near to the village of the cacique Quibian, which was situated on the side of a hill, the cacique came down to the banks to meet him, with a great train of his subjects, unarmed, and making signs of peace. Quibian was naked, and painted after the fashion of the country. One of his attendants drew a great stone out of the river, and washed and rubbed it carefully, upon which the chieftain seated himself as upon a throne †. He received the Adelantado with great courtesy ; for the lofty, vigorous, and iron form of the latter, and his look

* Las Casas, l. ii., cap. 25. Hist. del Almirante, cap. 95.

† P. Martyr, decad. 3, l. iv.

of resolution and command, were calculated to inspire awe and respect in an Indian warrior. The cacique, however, was wary and politic. His jealousy was awakened by the intrusion of these strangers into his territories; but he saw the futility of any open attempt to resist them. He acceded to the wishes of the Adelantado, therefore, to visit the interior of his dominions, and furnished him with three guides to conduct him to the mines.

Leaving a number of his men to guard the boats, the Adelantado departed on foot with the remainder, led on by the guides. After penetrating into the interior about four leagues and a half, they slept for the first night on the banks of a river, which seemed to water the whole country with its windings, and which they had crossed upwards of forty times. On the second day, they proceeded a league and a half farther, and arrived among thick forests, where their guides informed them the mines were situated. In fact, the whole soil appeared to be impregnated with gold. They gathered it from among the roots of the trees, which were of an immense height, and magnificent foliage. In the space of two hours that they re-

mained there, each man had collected a little quantity of gold, gathered from the surface of the earth. From hence the guides took the Adelantado to the summit of a high hill, and showing him an extent of country as far as the eye could reach, assured him that the whole of it, to the distance of twenty days' journey westward, abounded in gold, naming to him several of the principal places *.

The Adelantado and his party returned in high spirits to the ships, and rejoiced the admiral with the favourable report of their expedition. It was soon discovered, however, that the politic Quibian had deceived them. His guides, by his instructions, had taken the Spaniards to the mines of a neighbouring cacique with whom he was at war, hoping by this stratagem to lead these dangerous intruders out of his own domains, and divert them into the territories of his enemy. The admiral was informed that the real mines of Veragua were both nearer and much more wealthy.

The indefatigable Adelantado set forth again on the 16th of February, with an armed band of fifty-nine men, marching along the coast westward, a boat with fourteen men keeping pace with him

* Letter of the Admiral from Jamaica.

by sea. In this excursion he explored an extensive tract of country, and visited the dominions of various caciques, by whom he was amicably received, and hospitably entertained.

He met continually with proofs of the abundance of gold in the neighbourhood; the natives generally wearing great plates of it suspended round their necks by cotton cords. There were tracts of land, also, cultivated with Indian corn—one continuing for the extent of six leagues; and the country abounded with exquisite fruits. He again heard of a nation in the interior, advanced in arts and arms, wearing clothing, and being armed like the Spaniards. Either these were vague and exaggerated rumours concerning the great empire of Peru, or the Adelantado had misunderstood the signs of his informants. He returned, after an absence of several days, with a great quantity of gold, and with the most animating accounts of the country. He had found no port, however, equal to the river of Belen, and he was convinced that gold was nowhere to be met with in such abundance as in the district of Veragua *.

* Las Casas, l. ii., c. 25. Hist. del Almirante, c. 95,

CHAPTER VII.

COMMENCEMENT OF A SETTLEMENT ON THE RIVER BELEN. CONSPIRACY OF THE NATIVES. EXPEDITION OF THE ADELANTADO TO SURPRISE QUIBIAN.

[1503.]

THE reports brought to Columbus, from every side, of the wealth of the neighbourhood, the golden tract of twenty days' journey in extent, shewn to his brother from the mountain, the rumours of a rich and civilized country at no great distance, all convinced him that he had reached one of the most favoured parts of the Asiatic continent. Again his ardent mind kindled up with glowing anticipations. He fancied himself arrived at a fountain-head of riches, at one of the sources of the unbounded wealth of King Solomon. Josephus, in his work on the Antiquities of the Jews, had expressed an opinion, that the gold for the building of the temple of Jerusalem had been procured from the mines of the Aurea Chersonesus. Columbus supposed the mines of Veragua to be the

same. They lay, as he observed, "within the same distance from the pole and from the line;" and if the information which he fancied he had received from the Indians was to be depended on, they were situated about the same distance from the Ganges*.

Here, then, it appeared to him, was a place at which to found a colony, and establish a mart that should become an emporium of the wealth of a vast tract of mines. Within the two first days after his arrival in the country, as he wrote to the sovereigns, he had seen more signs of gold than in Hispaniola during four years. That island, so long the object of his pride and hopes, had been taken from him, and was a scene of confusion; the pearl coast of Paria was ravaged by mere adventurers; all his plans concerning both had been defeated; but here was a far more wealthy region than either, and one calculated to console him for all his wrongs and deprivations.

On consulting with his brother, therefore, he resolved immediately to commence an establishment

* Letter of Columbus from Jamaica.

here, for the purpose of securing the possession of the country, and of exploring and working the mines. The Adelantado agreed to remain with the greater part of the people, while the admiral should return to Spain for reinforcements and supplies. The greatest despatch was employed in carrying this plan into immediate operation. Eighty men were selected to remain. They were separated into parties of about ten each, and commenced building houses on a small eminence, situated on the bank of a creek, about a bow-shot within the mouth of the river Belen. The houses were of wood, thatched with the leaves of palm trees which grew on the adjacent shore. One larger than the rest was to serve as a magazine, to receive their ammunition, artillery, and a part of their provisions. The principal part was stored, for greater security, on board of one of the caravels, which was to be left for the use of the colony. It was true they had but a scanty supply of European stores remaining, consisting chiefly of biscuit, cheese, pulse, wine, oil, and vinegar; but the country produced excellent fruits, among which were bananas, plantains, pine apples, and

cocoa nuts. There was also maize in abundance, together with various roots, such as were found in Hispaniola. The rivers and the sea-coast abounded with fish, to take which they were furnished with all the necessary implements. The natives, too, made beverages of various kinds. One from the juice of the pine apples, having a vinous flavour; another from maize, resembling beer; and another from the fruit of a species of palm-tree*. There appeared to be no danger, therefore, of suffering from famine. Columbus took pains to conciliate the good will of the Indians, that they might supply the wants of the colony during his absence, and he made many presents to Quibian, by way of reconciling him to this intrusion into his territories†.

The necessary arrangements being made for the colony, and a number of the houses being roofed, and sufficiently finished for occupation, the admiral prepared for his departure, when an unlooked-for obstacle presented itself. The heavy rains which had so long distressed him during this expedition had recently ceased. The torrents from the moun-

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 96.

† Letter from Jamaica.

tains were over; and the river which had once put him to such peril by its sudden swelling, had now become so shallow, that there was not above half a fathom water on the bar. Though his vessels were small, it was impossible to draw them over the sands, which thus choked the mouth of the river, for there was a swell rolling and tumbling upon them, which would have dashed his worm-eaten barks to pieces. He was obliged, therefore, to wait with patience, and pray for the return of those rains which he had lately deplored, that a second inundation might swell the river, and enable him to get to sea.

In the mean time, Quibian, the cacique of Veragua, beheld, with secret jealousy and indignation, these strange intruders erecting habitations, prying into the secrets of the land, and manifesting an intention of establishing themselves in his territories. He was of a bold and warlike spirit, he had a great force of warriors at his command; and being ignorant of the vast superiority of the Europeans in the art of war, he thought it easy, by a well-concerted artifice, to overwhelm and utterly destroy them. He sent messengers round, and

ordered all his fighting men to assemble at his residence on the river Veragua, under pretext of making war upon a neighbouring province. Numbers of the Indian warriors passed by the harbour where the ships were anchored, repairing to the head-quarters of their chieftain. No suspicion was entertained of their real design, by the admiral or his officers. On board of the squadron, however, was one Diego Mendez, a man of zeal and spirit, and entirely devoted to the admiral. He had sailed in the capacity of chief notary, and was to remain in the settlement as royal accountant. Mendez being of a shrewd and prying character, perceived something in the movements of the Indians, which made him doubt that some treachery was intended. He communicated his suspicions to the admiral, and offered to proceed along the sea-coast to the river Veragua, in an armed boat, in search of the Indian camp, to make observations. His bold offer was accepted. Mendez sallied forth from the river, but had scarcely advanced a league along the coast when he perceived a large force of Indians upon the shore. He immediately landed alone, and ordering that

the boat should be kept afloat, entered intrepidly among the Indians. There were about a thousand warriors, armed and supplied with provisions, as if for an expedition. Mendez offered to accompany them with his armed boat, in quest of their enemies. The Indians declined his offer with evident signs of impatience at his intrusion. He returned to his boat, and kept watch upon them all the night, until seeing that they were vigilantly observed, they returned to Veragua.

Mendez hastened back to the admiral, with information of what he had seen; giving it as his opinion that the Indians had been on their way to surprise the Spaniards. The admiral was loth to believe in such treachery, and was desirous of obtaining clearer information, before he took any step that might interrupt the apparently good understanding that existed with the natives. The zealous and indefatigable Mendez now offered to proceed by land with a single companion, and penetrate as a spy to the very head-quarters of the Indians, to the residence of Quibian. It was a service of life and death, but such hazardous enterprizes afford delight to men who are calculated to execute them.

Departing with his companion, one Rodrigo de Escobar, they proceeded on foot along the sea-shore, to avoid the thick forests, which were almost impassable to an European; in this way they came to the mouth of the Veragua. Here they found two canoes of Indians, with whom Mendez entered into conversation by signs. From these he gathered that his suspicions had been correct. The army which he had kept a watch upon, had been on the way to the harbour, to surprise and burn the ships and houses of the Spaniards, and to make a general massacre. They had been disconcerted by finding themselves observed, and had abandoned the attempt for the time, but intended to resume it within two days. Mendez requested the Indians to convey him up the river to the residence of Quibian. They remonstrated with him on the certain death to which he exposed himself; but he overcame their reluctance by various presents, and they landed him at the village of the cacique.

It was not compact, but consisted of a number of detached houses, interspersed among trees on the banks of the river. The habitation of

Quibian was spacious, and situated above the rest, on a hill which rose from the water's edge. Mendez found the whole place in a bustle and stir of warlike preparation. The arrival of the two Spaniards excited surprise and uneasiness. When they offered to ascend the hill to the dwelling of the cacique, they were opposed by the Indians. Mendez, having heard that Quibian had been wounded in the leg by an arrow, gave himself out as a surgeon, come to cure the wound; and distributing a few presents, was permitted to proceed. The mansion of the cacique was on the crest of the hill. A broad level open place extended before it, around which were three hundred heads of enemies who had been slain in battle. Undismayed by so dismal an avenue to the dwelling of this grim warrior, Mendez and his companions crossed the place; when a number of women and children who were assembled round the door, began to utter piercing cries, and fled with terror into the house.

A young and powerful Indian, son to the cacique, sallied forth in a violent rage, and struck the intruding Mendez a blow that made him re-

coil for several paces. The latter endeavoured to pacify him by gentle words; and taking out a box of ointment, assured him that he only came for the purpose of curing his father's wound. It was with great difficulty that Mendez lulled his suspicions and pacified his rage, making him presents of a comb, scissors, and looking-glass, and teaching him and his Indians to use them in cutting and arranging their hair, with which they were greatly delighted. So singular is it that man, in a savage state, appears oftener accessible through his vanity, than through any other foible. Finding it impossible to gain access to the cacique, and having gathered proof sufficient to convince him that a dangerous plot was impending over the Spaniards, and about to be carried into effect, he returned with all haste to the harbour*.

The information of Mendez was confirmed by an Indian interpreter, a native of the neighbourhood, who had become attached to the white men, and having overheard the designs of his countrymen revealed them to the admiral†. It was ascer-

* Relation made by Diego Mendez in his last testament. Navarrete, t. i.

† Letters from Jamaica. Hist. del Almirante, c. 97.

tained that Quibian, with a great force of warriors, intended to assault the ships and houses, in the dead of the night, to wrap them in flames, and suffer not a Spaniard to escape. Strong guards were immediately appointed to keep watch upon the squadron and the settlement; but the military spirit of the Adelantado suggested a bolder expedient. It was to march at once to the residence of Quibian, to take him by surprise, seize upon himself, his family, and principal warriors, send them prisoners to Spain, and take possession of the village for the use of the Spaniards.

With the prompt and resolute Adelantado, to conceive a plan was to carry it into immediate execution, and, in fact, the impending danger admitted of no delay. Taking with him seventy-four men, well armed, among whom was Diego Mendez, and being accompanied by the Indian interpreter who had revealed the plot, he set off on the 30th of March, in the boats, to the mouth of the Veragua, ascended it rapidly, and before the Indians could have notice of his movements, landed at the village, at the foot of the hill on which the house of the cacique was situated.

When Quibian heard that the Adelantado was below with a large body of his followers, he sent a messenger, requesting him not to come up to his house; not, it is believed, from any apprehension of hostility, or suspicion that his designs were discovered, but from fear lest the Spaniards should see his women: for Fernando Columbus intimates that the Indians of this place were extremely jealous. It is probable that the conduct of the Spaniards towards their females had given them abundant cause.

The Adelantado paid no attention to this request: but, lest the cacique should take alarm and fly at the sight of a large force, he ascended the hill, accompanied by only five men, among whom was Diego Mendez; ordering the rest to come on, with great caution and secrecy, two at a time, and at a distance from each other. On the discharge of an arquebuss, they were to surround the dwelling and suffer no one to escape.

As the Adelantado drew near to the house, another messenger came forth entreating him not to enter, for that the cacique would come forth to meet him, though ill of a wound which he had

received from an arrow. Shortly after Quibian came forth, and seating himself in the portal, desired the Adelantado to approach singly. Don Bartholomew now ordered Diego Mendez and his four companions to remain at a little distance, to keep an eye upon his movements, and when they should see him take the cacique by the arm, to rush immediately to his assistance. He then advanced with his Indian interpreter, the latter trembling with fear, standing in habitual awe of the powerful chieftain, and doubting the capability of the Spaniards to withstand him. A short conversation took place, by means of the interpreter, relative to the surrounding country. The Adelantado then adverted to the wound of the cacique, and pretending to examine it, took him by the arm. At the concerted signal four of the Spaniards rushed forward, the fifth discharged the arquebuss. The cacique attempted to get loose, but was firmly held in the iron grasp of the Adelantado. Being both men of great muscular power, a violent struggle ensued. Don Bartholomew, however, maintained the mastery, and Diego Mendez and his companions coming to his

assistance, Quibian was bound hand and foot. At the report of the arquebuss, the main body of the Spaniards surrounded the house and seized most of those who were within, consisting of fifty persons, old and young. Among these were the wives and children of Quibian, and several of his principal subjects. No one was wounded, for there was no resistance, and the Adelantado never permitted wanton bloodshed. When the poor savages saw their prince a captive, they filled the air with lamentations; imploring his release, and offering for his ransom a great treasure, which they said lay concealed in the neighbouring forest*.

The Adelantado was deaf to their supplications and their offers. Quibian was too dangerous a foe to be set at liberty: as a prisoner, he would be a hostage for the security of the settlement. Apprehensive that the whole neighbourhood would be in arms, and anxious to secure his prize, he determined to send the cacique and the other prisoners on board of the ships, while he remained on shore with a part of his men to pursue the Indians who

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 97. Las Casas, l. ii., c. 27.

had escaped. Juan Sanchez, the principal pilot of the squadron, a powerful and spirited man, volunteered to take charge of the captives. On committing the chieftain to his care, the Adelantado warned him to be on his guard against any attempt at rescue or escape. The sturdy pilot replied that if the cacique got out of his hands, he would give them leave to pluck out his beard, hair by hair; with this vaunt he departed, bearing off Quibian bound hand and foot. On arriving at the boat, he secured him by a strong cord to one of the benches. It was a dark night. As the boat proceeded down the river, the cacique complained piteously of the painfulness of his bonds, until the rough heart of the pilot was touched with compassion. When they had nearly arrived at the mouth of the river, therefore, he loosened the cord by which Quibian was tied to the bench, keeping the end of it in his hand. The wily Indian now watched his opportunity, and when Sanchez was looking another way, plunged suddenly into the water. It was as if a rock had fallen into the river. He sank to the bottom and

disappeared, and so violent had been his plunge, that the pilot had to let go the cord, lest he should be drawn in after him. The darkness of the night, and the bustle which took place, in preventing the escape of the other prisoners, rendered it impossible to pursue the cacique, or even to ascertain his fate. Juan Sanchez hastened to the ships with the residue of the captives, deeply mortified at being thus outwitted by a savage.

The Adelantado remained all night on shore. The following morning, when he beheld the wild, broken, and mountainous nature of the country, and the scattered situation of the habitations, perched on different heights, he gave up the search after the Indians, among their rocks and fastnesses, and returned to the ships with the spoils of the cacique's mansion. These consisted of bracelets, anklets, and massive plates of gold, such as were worn round the neck, together with two golden coronets. The whole amounted to the value of three hundred ducats *. One fifth of the

* Equivalent to one thousand two hundred and eighty-one dollars at the present day.

booty was set apart for the crown. The residue was shared among those concerned in the enterprise. To the Adelantado one of the coronets was assigned, as a trophy of his exploit *.

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 98. Las Casas, l. ii. c. 27. Many of the particulars of this chapter are from a short narrative given by Diego Mendez, and inserted in his last will and testament. It is written in a strain of simple egotism, as he represents himself as the principal and almost the sole actor in every affair. The facts, however, have all the air of veracity, and being given on such a solemn occasion, the document is entitled to high credit. He will be found to distinguish himself on another hazardous and important occasion in the course of this history.—Vide Navarrete, Collec., t. i.

CHAPTER VIII.

DISASTERS OF THE SETTLEMENT.

[1503.]

It was hoped by Columbus that the vigorous measure of the Adelantado would strike terror into the Indians of the neighbourhood, and prevent any further designs upon the settlement. Quibian had probably perished. If he survived, he must be disheartened by the loss of his family, and several of his principal subjects, and fearful of their being made responsible for any act of violence on his part. The heavy rains, therefore, which fall so frequently among the mountains of this isthmus, having again swelled the river, Columbus made his final arrangements for the management of the colony, and having given much wholesome counsel to the Spaniards who were to remain, and taken an affectionate leave of his brother, he got under weigh with three of the caravels, leaving the fourth for the use of the settlement. As the water was still shallow at the bar, it was necessary to lighten the ships of a great part of their cargoes. They were

towed out by the boats in calm weather, when there was scarcely any swell. They grounded, however, repeatedly; and had not the sand of the bar been very light and shifting, they must have sustained great injury. When fairly released from the river, and their cargoes re-shipped, they remained at anchor within a league of the shore, waiting for a favourable wind. It was the intention of the admiral to touch at Hispaniola, on his way to Spain, and send from thence such supplies and reinforcements for the settlement as the island might furnish. The wind continuing adverse, he sent a boat on shore on the 6th of April, under the command of Diego Tristan, captain of one of the caravels, who was to procure wood and water, and to make some communications to the Adelantado. The expedition of this boat proved fatal to its crew, but was providential to the settlement.

The cacique Quibian had not perished as some had supposed. Though both hands and feet were bound, yet in the water he was as in his natural element. Plunging to the bottom of the river, he had swam below the surface until sufficiently distant to be out of view in the darkness of the night,

then emerging again, he had made his way to shore. The desolation of his home, and the capture of his wives and children, filled him with anguish; but when he saw the vessels in which they were confined issuing forth from the river, and bearing them off to the unknown world from whence these strangers had come, he was transported with fury and despair, and determined to wreak a signal vengeance upon the white men who remained behind. Gathering together a great number of his warriors, he came secretly upon the settlement, in that stealthy and silent manner in which Indians can move unheard through the most entangled forests. The little hill on which the houses of the Spaniards were built, was surrounded by thick woods, which enabled the Indians to approach unseen to within ten paces. The Spaniards thinking the enemy completely discomfited and dispersed, were perfectly off their guard. Some had strayed to the sea-shore, to take a farewell look at the ships; some were on board of the caravel in the river; others were scattered about the houses: on a sudden, the Indians burst from their concealment

with yells and howlings. They rushed upon the houses, launched their javelins through the roofs of palm leaves, hurled them in at the windows, or thrust them through the crevices of the logs which composed the walls. As the houses were small, several of the inhabitants were wounded. On the first alarm, the Adelantado seized a lance, and sallied forth with seven or eight of his men, whom he animated by word and example to a vigorous defence. Diego Mendez likewise rallied several of his companions, and coming to the assistance of the Adelantado, they drove the enemy into the forest, killing and wounding several. The Indians kept up a fire of darts and arrows from among the trees; and made furious sallies occasionally with their war clubs; but there was no withstanding the keen edge of the Spanish swords, and a fierce blood-hound being let loose upon them, completed their terror. They fled howling through the forest; leaving a number dead on the field, and having killed one Spaniard and wounded eight. Among the latter was the Adelantado, who received a slight thrust in the breast from a javelin.

The boat which the admiral had sent on shore, arrived during the contest. Diego Tristan the captain, however, remained a mere spectator; fearing to approach the land, lest the Spaniards might rush on board in such numbers as to sink his boat. When the Indians had been put to flight, he proceeded up the river in quest of fresh water, disregarding the earnest counsels of those on shore, who warned him that he might be cut off by the enemy in their canoes.

The river was deep and narrow, shut in by high banks, and overhanging trees. The forests on each side were thick and impenetrable; so that there was no landing-place, excepting here and there where an Indian foot-path wound down to the shore, to some fishing ground, or some place where the natives kept their canoes.

The boat had ascended about a league above the village to a part of the river where the water became fresh, and where it was completely overshadowed by lofty banks and spreading trees. Suddenly, fearful yells and war-hoops rose on every side, with the blasts of conch-shells. Light canoes darted forth in every direction from the dark

hollows, and over-hanging thickets of the banks. They were each dexterously managed by a single savage, while others stood up brandishing their lances, and hurling them at the Spaniards. Others threw their weapons from the banks of the river and the branches of the trees. There were eight sailors in the boat, and three soldiers. Galled and wounded by the shower of missiles, confounded by the yells and the blasts of conchs, and by the assaults which thickened from every side, and losing all presence of mind, they neglected to use either oars or fire-arms, and only sought to shelter themselves with their bucklers. The captain, Diego Tristan, had received several wounds; still he displayed great intrepidity, endeavouring to rouse and animate his men, when a javelin hurled by an Indian, pierced his right eye, and struck him dead. The canoes now closed upon the boat, and a general massacre ensued. But one Spaniard escaped, named Juan de Noya, a cooper of Seville, who having fallen overboard in the midst of the action, dived to the bottom, and swimming under water, gained the bank of the river unperceived. From thence he made his way down to the settle-

ment, bringing tidings of the massacre of his captain and comrades.

The Spaniards were filled with dismay at the dangers which were thickening around them. They were few in number, several of them wounded, and they were in the midst of tribes of exasperated savages, far more fierce and warlike in character than those to whom they had been accustomed. The admiral was ignorant of their misfortunes, and would sail away without yielding them assistance, and they should be abandoned to sink beneath the overwhelming force of barbarous foes, or to perish with hunger on this inhospitable coast. Thus seized with a sudden panic, they determined to take the caravel which had been left with them, and to abandon the place altogether. The Adelantado remonstrated with them in vain, nothing would content them but to put to sea immediately. Here a new alarm awaited them. The torrents having subsided, the river was again shallow, and it was impossible for the caravel to pass over the bar. They now took the boat of the caravel, to bear tidings of their danger to the admiral, and to implore him

not to abandon them; but the wind was boisterous, a high sea was rolling, and a heavy surf, tumbling and breaking at the mouth of the river, prevented the boat from getting out. While thus cut off from all retreat, and separated from all relief, horrors increased upon them. The mangled bodies of Diego Tristan and his men came floating down the stream, and drifting about the harbour, while flights of crows, and other carrion birds, were feeding on them, and hovering, and screaming, and fighting about their prey. The forlorn Spaniards contemplated this scene with shuddering; it appeared ominous of the fate that awaited themselves.

In the mean time the Indians, elated by their triumph over the crew of the boat, renewed their hostilities upon the harbour. Their whoops and yells answered to each other from various parts of the neighbourhood. The dismal sound of conchs and war drums was heard in every direction in the deep bosom of the woods, and shewed that the enemy was continually augmenting in number. They seemed to fill the adjacent forest, rushing

forth upon any straggling party of Spaniards, and making partial attacks upon the houses. It was considered no longer safe to remain in the village which they had built. The close forest which surrounded it was a covert for the approaches of the enemy. The Adelantado chose, therefore, an open place on the shore at some distance from the wood. Here he caused a kind of bulwark to be made of the boat of the caravel, and of chests, casks, and similar articles. Two places were left open as embrasures, in which were placed a couple of falconets, or small pieces of artillery, in such manner as to command the neighbourhood. In this little fortress the Spaniards shut themselves up; its walls were sufficient to screen them from the darts and arrows of the Indians, but mostly they depended upon their fire-arms, the sound of which struck dismay into the savages, especially when they saw the effect of the balls, splintering and rending the trees around them, and carrying havoc to such a distance. The Indians were thus kept in check for the present, and deterred from venturing from the forest; but the Spaniards, ex-

hausted by constant watching and incessant alarms, were filled with despondency, and anticipated all kinds of evils when their ammunition should be exhausted, or they should be driven forth by hunger to seek for food*.

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 98. Las Casas, l. ii.. Letter of Columbus from Jamaica. Relation of Diego Mendez, Navarrete, t. i. Journal of Porras, Navarrete, t. i.

CHAPTER IX.

DISTRESS OF THE ADMIRAL ON BOARD OF HIS SHIP. ULTIMATE RELIEF OF THE SETTLEMENT.

[1503.]

While the Adelantado and his men were exposed to such imminent peril on shore, great anxiety prevailed on board of the ships. Day after day elapsed without the return of Diego Tristan and his party, and it was feared that some disaster had befallen them. Columbus would have sent on shore to make inquiries; but there was only one boat remaining for the service of the squadron, and he did not dare to risk it in the rough sea and heavy surf that were prevailing. A dismal circumstance occurred to increase the gloom and uneasiness of the crews. On board of one of the caravels were confined the family and household of the cacique Quibian. It was intended to carry them to Spain, for as long as they remained in the power of the Spaniards, Columbus trusted that their tribe would

be deterred from further hostilities. They were shut up at night in the forecastle of the caravel, the hatchway of which was secured by a strong chain and padlock. As several of the crew slept upon the hatch, and as it was so high as to be considered out of reach of the prisoners, they neglected to fasten the chain. The Indians discovered their negligence, and formed a plan of escape. Collecting together a quantity of stones from the ballast of the vessel, they made a great heap directly under the hatchway. Several of the most powerful warriors mounted upon the top, and bending their backs, by a sudden and simultaneous effort burst open the covert, flinging the seamen who slept upon it to the opposite side of the ship. In an instant the greater part of the Indians sprang forth, plunged into the sea, and swam for shore. The alarm being given, several were prevented from sallying forth; others were seized on the deck, and forced back into the forecastle; the hatchway was carefully chained down, and a guard was set for the rest of the night. In the morning, when the Spaniards went to examine the captives, they were all found dead. Some had

hanged themselves with the ends of ropes, their knees touching the floor; others had strangled themselves by straining the cords tight with their feet. The most inflexible determination on death was visible in the mode in which they had destroyed themselves; and the whole presented a picture of the fierce and unconquerable spirit of these people, and their horror of the white men *.

The escape of the prisoners occasioned great anxiety to the admiral. He feared they would stimulate their countrymen to some violent act of vengeance, and he trembled for the safety of his brother. Still this painful mystery reigned over the land. The boat of Diego Tristan had not returned, and the raging surf prevented all communication. The most sinister apprehensions prevailed among the seamen for the fate of their companions. At length, one Pedro Ledesma, a pilot of Seville, a man of about forty-five years of age, and of great strength of body and mind, presented himself before the admiral. He offered, if the boat would take him to the edge of the surf, to plunge into it, swim to shore, and bring off

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 99.

news of their friends. He had been piqued by the achievement of the Indian captives, in swimming to land at a league's distance, in defiance of sea and surf. Surely, he said, if they dare venture so much to procure their individual liberties, I ought to brave at least a part of the danger, to save the lives of so many companions. His offer was gladly accepted by the admiral, and was boldly accomplished. The boat approached with him as near to the surf as safety would permit, where it was to await his return. Here, stripping himself, he plunged into the sea, and after buffeting for some time with the breakers, sometimes rising upon their surges, sometimes buried beneath them, and dashed upon the sand, he succeeded in reaching the shore.

He found his countrymen shut up in their forlorn fortress, beleagued by savage foes, and learnt the tragical fate of Diego Tristan and his companions. Many of the Spaniards, in their horror and despair, had thrown off all subordination. They had refused to assist in any measure that had in view their continuance in this place, and they thought of nothing but their escape. When they beheld

Ledesma, a messenger from the ships, they surrounded him with frantic eagerness. They urged him to implore the admiral to take them on board, and not to abandon them on a coast where their destruction was inevitable. They were preparing canoes to take them to the ships, when the weather should moderate, the boat of the caravel being too small. If the admiral refused to take them on board, they swore they would embark in the vessel which remained with them, as soon as it could be extricated from the river, and abandon themselves to the mercy of the seas, rather than remain upon that fatal coast.

The hardy Ledesma, having heard all that his forlorn countrymen had to say, and communicated with the Adelantado and his officers, set out on his perilous return. He again braved the surf and the breakers, reached the boat which was waiting for him, and was conveyed back to the ships. The disasterous tidings from the land filled the heart of the admiral with grief and alarm. To leave his brother on shore, was to expose him to the mutiny of his own men, and the ferocity of the savages. He could spare no reinforcement from his ships;

the loss of Tristan and his companions having so much weakened his crews. Rather than the settlement should be broken up, he would gladly have joined the Adelantado with all his people; but how then could intelligence be conveyed to the sovereigns of this important discovery, and supplies obtained from Spain? There appeared no alternative, therefore, but to embark all the people, abandon the settlement for the present, and return at some future day, with a force competent to take secure possession of the country*. The state of the weather rendered the practicability even of this plan doubtful. The wind continued high, the sea rough, and no boat could pass between the squadron and the land. The situation of the ships was extremely perilous. They were feebly manned, crazed by the storms they had endured, and ready to fall to pieces from the ravages of the teredo. In this state they were anchored on a lee shore, with a boisterous wind and sea, in a climate subject to tempests, and where the least augmentation of the weather might drive them among the breakers. Every hour increased the

* Letter of Columbus from Jamaica.

anxiety of Columbus for his brother, for his people, and for his ships, yet each succeding hour only appeared to render the impending dangers more imminent. Days of constant perturbation, and nights of sleepless anguish, preyed upon a constitution broken by age and hardships. Amidst the acute maladies of his body and the fever of his mind, he appears to have been visited by partial delirium. The workings of his diseased imagination, at such times, he was prone to consider as something mysterious and supernatural. In a letter to the sovereigns, he gives a solemn account of a kind of vision which comforted him when full of despondency and tossing on a couch of pain.

"Wearied and sighing," he says, "I fell into a slumber, when I heard a piteous voice saying to me, 'Oh fool, and slow to believe, and serve thy God, the God of all! What did he more for Moses, or for his servant David? From the time that thou wert born, he has ever taken great care of thee. When he saw thee of a fitting age, he made thy name to resound marvellously throughout the earth. The Indies, those rich parts of the world, he gave thee for thine own, and empowered

thee to dispose of them to others according to thy pleasure. Of the gates of the ocean sea, shut up by such mighty chains, he delivered thee the keys, and thou wert obeyed in many lands, and didst acquire honourable fame among Christians. What did he more for the great people of Israel, when he led them forth from Egypt? Or for David, whom, from being a shepherd, he made a king? Turn to him, then, and acknowledge thine error; his mercy is infinite. Thine age shall be no impediment to any great undertaking. Abraham was above an hundred years when he begat Isaac: and was Sarah youthful? Thou urgest despondingly for succour. Answer! who has afflicted thee so much, and so many times?—God, or the world? The privileges and promises which God has made thee he has never broken; nor said, after having received thy services, that his meaning was different, and to be understood in a different sense. He performs to the very letter. He fulfils all that he promises, and with increase. Such is his custom. I have shown thee what thy Creator has done for thee, and what he does for all. The present is the reward of the toils and perils thou hast endured

in serving others.' I heard all this," adds Columbus, "as one almost dead, and had no power to reply to words so true, excepting to weep for my errors. Whoever it was that spake to me, finished by saying, 'Fear not! Confide! All these tribulations are written in marble, and not without cause.'"

Such is the singular statement which Columbus gave to the sovereigns of his supposed vision. It has been suggested that this was a mere ingenious fiction, adroitly devised by him to convey a lesson to his prince; but such an idea is inconsistent with his character. He was too deeply imbued with awe of the Deity, and with reverence for his sovereign, to make use of such an artifice. The words here spoken to him by the supposed voice, are truths which dwelt upon his mind, and grieved his spirit during his waking hours. It is natural that they should recur vividly and coherently in his feverish dreams; and in recalling and relating a dream one is unconsciously apt to give it a little coherency. Besides, Columbus had a solemn belief that he was a peculiar instrument in the hands of providence, which, together with his

deep tinge of superstition, common to the age, made him prone to mistake every striking dream for a revelation. He is not to be measured by the same standard with ordinary men in ordinary circumstances. It is difficult for the mind to realize his situation, and to conceive the exaltations of spirit to which he must have been subject. The artless manner in which, in his letter to the sovereigns, he mingles up the rhapsodies and dreams of his imagination, with simple facts, and sound practical observations, pouring them forth with a kind of scriptural solemnity and poetry of language, is one of the most striking illustrations of a character richly compounded of extraordinary and apparently contradictory elements.

Immediately after this supposed vision, and after a duration of nine days, the boisterous weather subsided, the sea became calm, and the communication with the land was restored. It was found impossible to extricate the remaining caravel from the river; but every exertion was made to bring off the people, and the property, before there should be a return of bad weather. In this, the exertions of the zealous Diego Mendez were

eminently efficient. He had been for some days preparing for such an emergency. Cutting up the sails of the caravel, he had made great sacks to receive the biscuit. He had lashed two Indian canoes together with spars, so that they could not be overturned by the waves, and had made a platform on them capable of sustaining a great burden. This kind of raft was laden repeatedly with the stores, arms, and ammunition, which had been left on shore, and with the furniture of the caravel, which was entirely dismantled. When well freighted, it was towed by the boat to the ships. In this way, by constant and sleepless exertions, in the space of two days, almost every thing of value was transported on board the squadron, and little else left than the hull of the caravel, stranded, decayed, and rotting in the river. Diego Mendez superintended the whole embarkation with the most unwearied watchfulness and activity. He, and five companions, were the last to leave the shore, remaining all night at their perilous post, and embarking in the morning with the last cargo of effects.

Nothing could equal the transports of the Spa-

niards, when they found themselves once more on board of the ships, and saw a space of ocean between them and those forests which had lately seemed destined to be their graves. The joy of their comrades seemed little inferior to their own; and the perils and hardships which yet surrounded them, were forgotten for a time in mutual congratulations. The admiral was so much impressed with a sense of the high services rendered by Diego Mendez, throughout the late time of danger and disaster, that he gave him the command of the caravel, vacant by the death of the unfortunate Diego Tristan*.

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 99, 100. Las Casas, l. ii., c. 29. Relacion de Diego Mendez. Letter of Columbus from Jamaica. Journal of Porras, Navarrete Collec., t. i.

CHAPTER X.

DEPARTURE FROM THE COAST OF VERAGUA. ARRIVAL AT JAMAICA. STRANDING OF THE SHIPS.

[1503.]

The wind at length becoming favourable for his voyage, Columbus set sail, towards the end of April, from the disastrous coast of Veragua. The wretched condition of his ships, the enfeebled state of his crews, and the scarcity of provisions, determined him to make the best of his way to Hispaniola, where he might refit his vessels and procure the necessary supplies for his voyage to Europe. To the surprise of his pilot and crews, however, on making sail, he stood again along the coast to the eastward, instead of steering north, which they considered the direct route to Hispaniola. They fancied that Columbus intended to proceed immediately for Spain, and murmured loudly at the madness of attempting so long a voyage, with ships destitute of stores and consumed by the worms. Columbus and his brother, however, had

studied the navigation of those seas with a more observant and experienced eye. They considered it advisable to gain a considerable distance to the east, before standing across for Hispaniola, to avoid being swept away, far below their destined port, by the strong currents setting constantly to the west*. The admiral, however, did not impart his reasons to the pilots, being anxious to keep the knowledge of his routes as much to himself as possible, seeing that there were so many adventurers crowding into the field, and ready to follow on his track. He even took from the mariners their charts†, and boasts, in a letter to the sovereigns, that none of his pilots would be able to retrace the route to and from Veragua, nor to describe where it was situated.

Disregarding the murmurs of his men, therefore, Columbus continued along the coast eastward as far as Puerto Bello. Here he was obliged to leave one of the caravels, which was so pierced by the teredo, that it was impossible to keep her afloat. All the crews were now crowded into

* Hist. del Almirante. Letter from Jamaica.

† Journal of Porras. Navarrete Collec., t. i.

two caravels, and these were little better than mere wrecks. The utmost exertions were necessary to keep them free from water; while the incessant labour of the pumps bore hard on the seamen, who were enfeebled by scanty diet, and dejected by the various hardships they had undergone. Continuing onward, they passed Port Retreat, and a number of islands to which the admiral gave the name of Las Barbas, now termed the Mulatas, a little beyond Point Blas. Here Columbus supposed that he had arrived at the province of Mangu in the territories of the Grand Khan, described by Marco Polo as adjoining to Cathay*. He continued on about ten leagues farther, until he approached the entrance of what is at present called the Gulf of Darien. Here he had a consultation with his captains and pilots, who remonstrated at his persisting in this struggle against contrary winds and currents, representing the lamentable plight of the ships, and the infirm state of the crews†. Bidding farewell, therefore, to the main land, he stood northward on the 1st

* Letter from Jamaica.

† Testimony of Pedro de Ledesma. Pleito de los Colones.

of May, in quest of Hispaniola. As the wind was easterly, with a strong current setting to the west, Columbus kept as near the wind as possible. So little did his pilots know of their situation, that they supposed themselves to the east of the Caribbee Islands, whereas the admiral feared that, with all his exertions, he should fall to the westward of Hispaniola *. His apprehensions proved to be well founded; for, on the 10th of the month, he came in sight of two small low islands to the north-west of Hispaniola, to which, from the great quantities of tortoises seen about them, he gave the name of the Tortugas; they are now known as the Caymans. Passing wide of these, and continuing directly north, he found himself, on the 30th of May, among the cluster of islands on the south side of Cuba, to which he had formerly given the name of the Queen's Gardens; having been carried between eight and nine degrees west of his destined port. Here he cast anchor near one of the Keys, about ten leagues from the main island. His crews were suffering excessively through hunger and fatigue; nothing was left of the sea-

* Letter from Jamaica.

stores but a little biscuit, oil and vinegar; and they were obliged to labour incessantly at the pumps, to keep the vessels afloat. They had scarcely anchored at these islands, when there came on, at midnight, a sudden tempest, of such violence, that, according to the strong expression of Columbus, it seemed as if the world would dissolve *. They lost three of their anchors almost immediately, and the caravel Bermuda was driven with such violence upon the ship of the admiral, that the bow of the one, and the stern of the other, were greatly shattered. The sea running high, and the wind being boisterous, the vessels chafed and injured each other dreadfully, and it was with great difficulty that they were separated. One anchor only reremained to the admiral's ship, and this saved him from being driven upon the rocks; but at daylight the cable was found nearly worn asunder. Had the darkness continued an hour longer, he could scarcely have escaped shipwreck †.

At the end of six days, the weather having moderated, he resumed his course, standing east-

* Letter from Jamaica.

† Hist. del Almirante, cap. 100. Letter of Columbus from Jamaica.

ward for Hispaniola: "his people," as he says, "dismayed and down-hearted, almost all his anchors lost, and his vessels bored as full of holes as a honeycomb." After struggling against contrary winds and the usual currents from the east, he reached Cape Cruz, and anchored at a village in the province of Macaca*, where he had touched in his voyage in 1494, along the southern coast of Cuba. Here he obtained a supply of cassava bread from the natives, and remained several days, detained by contrary winds. Making sail again, he endeavoured to beat up to Hispaniola; but every effort was in vain. The winds and currents continued adverse; the leaks continually gained upon his vessels, though the pumps were kept incessantly going, and the seamen even baled the water out with buckets and kettles. The admiral now stood, in despair, for the island of Jamaica, to seek some secure port; for there was imminent danger of foundering at sea. On the eve of St. John, the 23rd of June, they put into Puerto Bueno, now called Dry Harbour, but met with none of the natives from whom they

* Hist. del Almirante. Journal of Porras.

could obtain provisions, nor was there any fresh water to be had in the neighbourhood. Suffering from hunger and thirst, they sailed eastward, on the following day, to another harbour, to which the admiral gave the name of Port San Gloria, but which at present is known as Don Christopher's Cove.

Here, at last, Columbus had to give up his long and arduous struggle against the unremitting persecution of the elements. His ships, reduced to mere wrecks, could no longer keep the sea, and were ready to sink even in port. He ordered them, therefore, to be run aground, within a bow-shot of the shore, and fastened together, side by side. They soon filled with water to the decks. Thatched cabins were then erected at the prow and stern for the accommodation of the crews, and the wreck was placed in the best possible state of defence. Thus castled in the sea, Columbus trusted to be able to repel any sudden attack of the natives, and at the same time to keep his men from roving about the neighbourhood and indulging in their usual excesses. No one was allowed to go on shore without especial

license, and the utmost precaution was taken to prevent any offence being given to the Indians. Any exasperation of them might be fatal to the Spaniards in their present forlorn situation. A firebrand thrown into their wooden fortress might wrap it in flames, and leave them defenceless amidst hostile thousands.

BOOK XVI.

CHAPTER I.

ARRANGEMENT OF DIEGO MENDEZ WITH THE CACIQUES FOR SUPPLIES OF PROVISIONS. SENT TO SAN DOMINGO BY COLUMBUS IN QUEST OF RELIEF.

[1503.]

The island of Jamaica was extremely populous and fertile; and the harbour soon swarmed with Indians, who brought provisions to barter with the Spaniards. To prevent any disputes in purchasing or sharing these supplies, two persons were appointed to superintend all bargains, and the provisions thus obtained were divided every evening among the people. This arrangement had a happy effect in promoting a peaceful intercourse. The stores thus furnished, however, coming from a limited neighbourhood of improvident beings, were not sufficient for the necessities of the Spaniards, and were so irregular as often to leave

them in pinching want. They feared, too, that the neighbourhood might soon be exhausted, in which case they should be reduced to famine. In this emergency, Diego Mendez stepped forward with his accustomed zeal, and volunteered to set off, with three men, on a foraging expedition about the island. His offer being gladly accepted by the admiral, he departed with his comrades well armed. He was every where treated with the utmost kindness by the natives. They took him to their houses, set meat and drink before him and his companions, and performed all the rites of savage hospitality. Mendez made an arrangement with a cacique of a numerous tribe, that his subjects should hunt and fish, and make cassava bread, and bring a quantity of these and other provisions every day to the harbour. They were to receive, in exchange, knives, combs, beads, fish-hooks, hawks'-bells, and other articles, from a Spaniard, who was to reside among them for that purpose. The agreement being made, Mendez dispatched one of his comrades to apprise the admiral. He then pursued his journey three leagues farther, when he made

a similar arrangement, and dispatched another of his companions to the admiral. Proceeding onward, about thirteen leagues from the ships, he arrived at the residence of another cacique, called Huarco, where he was generously entertained. The cacique ordered his subjects to bring a large quantity of provisions, for which Mendez paid him on the spot, and made arrangements for a like supply at stated intervals. He dispatched his third companion with this supply to the admiral, requesting, as usual, that an agent might be sent to receive and pay for the regular deliveries of provisions.

Mendez was now left alone, but he was fond of any enterprise that gave individual distinction. He requested of the cacique two Indians to accompany him to the end of the island, one to carry his provisions, and the other to bear the hammac, or cotton net in which he slept. These being granted, he pushed resolutely forward along the coast, until he reached the eastern extremity of Jamaica. Here he found a powerful cacique of the name of Ameyro. Mendez had buoyant spirits, great address, and an ingratiating manner

with the savages. He and the cacique became great friends, exchanged names, which is a kind of token of brotherhood, and Mendez engaged him to furnish provisions to the ships. He then bought an excellent canoe of the cacique, for which he gave him a splendid brass basin, a short frock or cassock, and one of the two shirts which formed his stock of linen. The cacique furnished him with six Indians to navigate his bark, and they parted mutually well-pleased. Diego Mendez coasted his way back, touching at the various places where he had made his arrangements. He found the Spanish agents already arrived at them, loaded his canoe with provisions, and returned in triumph to the harbour, where he was received with acclamations by his comrades, and with open arms by the admiral. The provisions he brought were a most seasonable supply, for the Spaniards were absolutely fasting; and thenceforward Indians arrived daily, well-laden, from the marts which he had established*.

The immediate wants of his people being thus provided for, Columbus revolved, in his anxious

* Relacion por Diego Mendez. Navarrete, t. i.

mind, the means of getting from this island. His ships were beyond the possibility of repair, and there was no hope of any chance sail arriving to his relief, on the shores of a savage island, in an unfrequented sea. The most likely measure appeared to be, to send notice of his situation to Ovando, the governor at San Domingo, entreating him to dispatch a vessel to his relief. But how was this message to be conveyed? The distance between Jamaica and Hispaniola was forty leagues, across a gulf swept by contrary currents; there were no means of transporting a messenger, except in the light canoes of the savages; and who would undertake so hazardous a voyage in a frail bark of the kind? Suddenly the idea of Diego Mendez, and the canoe he had recently purchased, presented itself to the mind of Columbus. He knew the ardour and intrepidity of Mendez, and his love of distinction by any hazardous exploit. Taking him aside, therefore, he addressed him in a manner calculated both to stimulate his zeal, and flatter his self-love. Mendez himself gives an artless account of this interesting conversation, which is full of character.

"Diego Mendez, my son," said the venerable admiral, "none of those whom I have here understand the great peril in which we are placed, excepting you and myself. We are few in number, and these savage Indians are many, and of fickle and irritable natures. On the least provocation they may throw firebrands from the shore, and consume us in our straw-thatched cabins. The arrangement which you have made with them for provisions, and which at present they fulfil so cheerfully, to-morrow they may break in their caprice, and may refuse to bring us any thing; nor have we the means to compel them by force, but are entirely at their pleasure. I have thought of a remedy, if it meets with your views. In this canoe, which you have purchased, some one may pass over to Hispaniola, and procure a ship, by which we may all be delivered from this great peril into which we have fallen. Tell me your opinion on the matter."

"To this," says Diego Mendez, "I replied, Señor, the danger in which we are placed, I well know is far greater than is easily conceived. As to passing from this island to Hispaniola, in so

small a vessel as a canoe, I hold it not merely difficult, but impossible; since it is necessary to traverse a gulf of forty leagues, and between islands where the sea is extremely impetuous, and seldom in repose. I know not who there is would adventure upon so extreme a peril."

Columbus made no reply, but from his looks and the nature of his silence, Mendez plainly perceived himself to be the person whom the admiral had in view; "Whereupon," continues he, "I added, Señor, I have many times put my life in peril of death to save you and all those who are here, and God has hitherto preserved me in a miraculous manner. There are, nevertheless, murmurers, who say that your Excellency intrusts to me all affairs wherein honour is to be gained, while there are others in your company who would execute them as well as I do. Therefore I beg that you would summon all the people, and propose this enterprise to them, to see if among them there is any one who will undertake it, which I doubt. If all decline it, I will then come forward and risk my life in your service, as I many times have done*."

* Relacion por Diego Mendez. Navarrete Collec., t. i.

The admiral gladly humoured the wishes of the worthy Mendez, for never was simple egotism accompanied by more generous and devoted loyalty. On the following morning, the crew was assembled, and the proposition publicly made. Every one drew back at the thoughts of it, pronouncing it the height of rashness. Upon this Diego Mendez stepped forward. "Señor," said he, "I have but one life to lose, yet I am willing to venture it for your service and for the good of all here present, and I trust in the protection of God, which I have experienced on so many other occasions."

Columbus embraced this zealous follower, who immediately set about preparing for his expedition. Drawing his canoe on shore, he put on a false keel, nailed weather-boards along the bow and stern, to prevent the sea from breaking over it; payed it with a coat of tar; furnished it with a mast and sail; and put in provisions for himself, a Spanish comrade, and six Indians.

In the mean time, Columbus wrote letters to Ovando, requesting that a ship might be immediately sent to bring him and his men to Hispa-

niola. He wrote a letter likewise to the sovereigns; for, after fulfilling his mission at San Domingo, Diego Mendez was to proceed to Spain on the admiral's affairs. In the letter to the sovereigns, Columbus depicted his deplorable situation, and entreated that a vessel might be dispatched to Hispaniola, to convey himself and his crew to Spain. He gave a comprehensive account of his voyage, most particulars of which have already been incorporated in this history, and he insisted greatly on the importance of the discovery of Veragua. He gave it as his opinion, that here were the mines of the Aurea Chersonesus, from whence Solomon had derived such wealth for the building of the Temple. He entreats that this golden coast may not, like other places which he had discovered, be abandoned to adventurers, or placed under the government of men who feel no interest in the cause. "This is not a child," he adds, "to be abandoned to a step-mother. I never think of Hispaniola and Paria without weeping. Their case is desperate and past cure; I hope their example may cause this region to be treated in a different manner." His imagination becomes

heated. He magnifies the supposed importance of Veragua, as transcending all his former discoveries; and he alludes to his favourite project for the deliverance of the Holy Sepulchre: "Jerusalem," he says, "and Mount Sion, are to be rebuilt by the hand of a Christian. Who is he to be? God, by the mouth of the Prophet, in the fourteenth Psalm, declares it. The abbot Joachim * says that he is to come out of Spain." His thoughts then revert to the ancient story of the Grand Khan, who had requested that sages might be sent to instruct him in the Christian faith. Columbus, thinking that he had been in the very vicinity of Cathay, exclaims with sudden zeal, "Who will offer himself for this task? If our Lord permit me to return to Spain, I engage to take him there, God helping, in safety."

* Joachim, native of the burgh of Celico, near Cosenza, travelled in the Holy Land. Returning to Calabria, he took the habit of the Cistercians in the monastery of Corazzo, of which he became prior and abbot, and afterwards rose to higher monastic importance. He died in 1202, having attained 72 years of age, leaving a great number of works; among the most known are commentaries on Isaiah, Jeremiah, and the Apocalypse. There are also prophecies by him, "which," (says the Dictionnaire Historique,) "during his life, made him to be admired by fools, and despised by men of sense; at present the latter sentiment prevails. He was either very weak or very presumptuous, to flatter himself that he had the keys of things of which God reserves the knowledge to himself."—Dict. Hist. t. v., Caen, 1785.

Nothing is more characteristic of Columbus than his earnest, artless, at times eloquent, and at times almost incoherent letters. What an instance of soaring enthusiasm and irrepressible enterprise is here exhibited! At the time that he was indulging in these visions, and proposing new and romantic enterprises, he was broken down by age and infirmities, racked by pain, confined to his bed, and shut up in a wreck on the coast of a remote and savage island. No stronger picture can be given of his situation, than that which shortly follows this transient glow of excitement; when, with one of his sudden transitions of thought, he awakens, as it were, to his actual condition.

"Until now," says he, "I have wept for others; have pity upon me, heaven, and weep for me, earth! In my temporal concerns, without a farthing to bestow; cast away here in the Indies; isolated in my misery—infirm—expecting each day will be my last; surrounded by cruel savages; in spiritual concerns, separated from the holy sacraments of the church, so that my soul will be lost, if separated here from my body! Weep for me, whoever has charity, truth, and jus-

tice. I came not on this voyage to gain honour or estate; for all hope of the kind is dead within me. I came to serve your majesties with a sound intention and an honest zeal, and I speak no falsehood. If it should please God to deliver me from hence, I humbly supplicate your majesties to permit me to repair to Rome, and perform other pilgrimages."

The despatches being ready, and the preparations of the canoe completed, Diego Mendez embarked, with his Spanish comrade and his six Indians, and departed along the coast to the eastward. This voyage was laborious and perilous. They had to make their way against strong currents. Once they were taken by roving canoes of Indians, but made their escape, and at length arrived at the end of the island; a distance of thirty-four leagues from the harbour. Here they remained, waiting for calm weather to venture upon the broad gulf, when they were suddenly surrounded and taken prisoners by a number of hostile Indians, who carried them off a distance of three leagues, where they determined to kill them. Some dispute arose about the division of the spoils

taken from the Spaniards, whereupon the savages agreed to settle it by a game of chance. While they were thus engaged, Diego Mendez escaped, found his way to his canoe, embarked in it, and returned alone to the harbour after fifteen days' absence. What became of his companions he does not mention, being seldom apt to speak of any person but himself. This account is taken from the narrative inserted in his last will and testament.

Columbus, though grieved at the failure of his message, was rejoiced at the escape of the faithful Mendez. The latter, nothing daunted by the perils and hardships he had undergone, offered to depart immediately on a second attempt, provided he could have persons to accompany him to the end of the island, and protect him from the natives. This the Adelantado offered to undertake, with a large party well armed. Bartholomew Fiesco, a Genoese, who had been captain of one of the caravels, was associated with Mendez in this second expedition. He was a man of great worth, strongly attached to the admiral, and much esteemed by him. Each had a large canoe under his command,

in which were six Spaniards and ten Indians—the latter were to serve as oarsmen. The canoes were to keep in company. On reaching Hispaniola, Fiesco was to return immediately to Jamaica, to relieve the anxiety of the admiral and his crew, by tidings of the safe arrival of their messenger. In the mean time, Diego Mendez was to proceed to San Domingo, deliver his letter to Ovando, procure and despatch a ship, and then to depart for Spain with the letter to the sovereigns.

All arrangements being made, the Indians placed in the canoes their frugal provisions of cassava bread, and each his calabash of water. The Spaniards, beside their bread, had a supply of the flesh of utias, and each his sword and target. In this way they launched forth upon their long and perilous voyage, followed by the prayers of their countrymen.

The Adelantado, with his armed band, kept pace with them along the coast. There was no attempt of the natives to molest them, and they arrived in safety at the end of the island. Here they remained three days before the sea was sufficiently calm for them to venture forth in their

feeble barks. At length, the weather being quite serene, they bade farewell to their comrades, and committed themselves to the broad sea. The Adelantado remained watching them, until they became mere specks on the ocean, and the evening hid them from his view. The next day he set out on his return to the harbour, stopping at various villages on the way, and endeavouring to confirm the good will of the natives *.

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 101.

CHAPTER II.

MUTINY OF PORRAS.

[1503.]

It might have been thought that the adverse fortune which had so long persecuted Columbus was now exhausted. In extremity, we begin to find consolation in the idea that, since things cannot be worse, they must soon change for the better. The envy which had once sickened at the glory and prosperity of Columbus could scarcely have devised for him a more forlorn heritage in the world he had discovered; the tenant of a wreck on a savage coast, in an untraversed ocean, at the mercy of barbarous hordes, who, in a moment, from precarious friends, might be transformed into ferocious enemies; afflicted, too, by excruciating maladies which confined him to his bed, and by the pains and infirmities which hardship and anxiety had heaped upon his advancing age. But Columbus had not yet exhausted his cup of bitter-

ness. He had yet to experience an evil worse than storm, or shipwreck, or bodily anguish, or the violence of savage hordes, in the perfidy of those in whom he confided.

Mendez and Fiesco had not long departed when the Spaniards in the wreck began to grow sickly, partly from the toils and exposures of the recent voyage, partly from being crowded in such narrow quarters in a moist and sultry climate, and partly from want of their accustomed food, for they could not habituate themselves to the diet of the Indians, which was principally of a vegetable nature. Their maladies were heightened and rendered more insupportable by mental suffering, by that suspense which keeps up a fretful irritation of spirit, and that hope deferred which gradually corrodes the heart. Accustomed to a life of bustle and variety, they had now nothing to do but loiter about the dreary hulk, and look out upon the sea, and watch for the canoe of Fiesco, and wonder at its protracted absence, and doubt its return. A long time elapsed, much more than sufficient for the voyage, but nothing was seen or heard of the canoe. Fears were entertained that their messen-

ger had perished. If so, how long were they to remain here, vainly looking for relief which was never to arrive? Some gradually sank into deep despondency, others became peevish and impatient. Murmurs broke forth, and, as usual with men in distress, murmurs of the most unreasonable kind. Instead of sympathising with their aged and infirm commander, who was involved in the same calamity, who in suffering transcended them all, and yet who was incessantly studious of their welfare, they began to rail against him as the cause of all their misfortunes.

The factious feeling of an unreasonable multitude would be of little importance if left to itself, and might end in idle clamour; it is the industry of one or two evil spirits that generally directs it to an object and makes it mischievous. Among the officers of Columbus were two brothers, Francisco and Diego de Porras. They were relatives of the royal treasurer Morales, who had married their sister, and had made interest with the admiral to give them some employment in the expedition *. To gratify the treasurer, he had appointed

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 102.

Francisco de Porras captain of one of the caravels, and had obtained for his brother Diego the situation of notary and accountant-general of the squadron. He had treated them, as he declares, with the kindness of relatives, though both proved themselves incompetent to their situations. They were vain and insolent men, and, like many others whom Columbus had benefited, requited his kindness with the blackest ingratitude *.

These men, finding the common people in a highly impatient and discontented state, mingled among them, and worked upon them with the most seditious insinuations. They assured them that all their hopes of relief through the agency of Mendez were idle. It was a mere delusion of the admiral to keep them quiet, and render them subservient to his purposes. He had no desire nor intention to return to Spain; he was banished thence. Hispaniola was equally closed to him, as had been proved by the exclusion of his ships from its harbour in a time of peril. To him, at present, all places were alike, and he was content to remain in Jamaica until his friends could make in-

* Letter of Columbus to his son Diego. Navarrete Collec.,

terest at court, and procure his recall from banishment. As to Mendez and Fiesco, they had been sent to Spain by Columbus on his own private affairs, not to procure a ship for the relief of his followers. If this were not the case, why did not the ship arrive, or why did not Fiesco return, as had been promised? Or if the canoes had really been sent for succour, the long time that had elapsed without tidings of them gave reason to believe that they had perished by the way. In such case, their only alternative would be, to take the canoes of the Indians and endeavour to go to Hispaniola. But there was no hope of persuading the admiral to such an undertaking, he was too old, and too helpless from the gout, to expose himself to the hardships of such a voyage. What then, were they to be sacrificed to his interests or his infirmities?—to give up their only chance for escape, and to linger and perish with him in this desolate wreck? If they succeeded in reaching Hispaniola they would be the better received for having left the admiral behind. Ovando was secretly hostile to him, fearing that he would regain the government of the island; on their arrival in Spain, the

Bishop Fonseca, from his enmity to Columbus, would be sure to take their part; the brothers Porras had powerful friends and relatives at court, to counteract any representations that might be made by the admiral; and they cited the case of Roldan's rebellion, to show that the prejudices of the public, and of men in power, would always be against him. Nay, they insinuated that the sovereigns, who, on that occasion, had deprived him of part of his dignities and privileges, would rejoice at a pretext for stripping him of the remainder*.

Columbus was aware that the minds of his people were embittered against him. He had repeatedly been treated with insolent impatience, and reproached with being the cause of their disasters. Accustomed, however, to the unreasonableness of men in adversity, and exercised, by many trials, in the mastery of his passions, he bore with their petulance, soothed their irritation, and endeavoured to cheer their spirits by the hopes of speedy succour. A little while longer, and he trusted that Fiesco would arrive with good

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 102.

tidings, when the certainty of relief would put an end to all these clamours. The mischief, however, was deeper than he apprehended; a complete mutiny was organised among his followers.

On the 2nd of January, 1504, Columbus was in his small cabin, on the stern of his vessel, being confined to his bed by the gout, which had now rendered him a complete cripple. While ruminating on his disastrous situation, Francisco de Porras suddenly entered. His abrupt and agitated manner betrayed the evil nature of his visit. He had the flurried impudence of a man who is about to perpetrate an open crime. Bursting forth into bitter complaints, at their being kept, week after week, and month after month, to perish piecemeal in that desolate place, he accused the admiral of having no intention to return to Spain. Columbus suspected something sinister from this unusual arrogance. He maintained, however, his calmness, and, raising himself in his bed, endeavoured to reason with Porras. He pointed out the impossibility of departing until those who had gone to Hispaniola should send them vessels. He represented how much more urgent must be his

desire to depart, since he had not merely his own safety to provide for, but he was accountable to God and his sovereigns for the welfare of all who had been committed to his charge. He reminded Porras that he had always consulted with them all, as to the measures to be taken for the common safety, and that what he had done, had been with the general approbation; still, if any other measure appeared advisable, he recommended that they should assemble together, and consult upon it, and adopt whatever course appeared most judicious.

The measures of Porras and his comrades, however, were already concerted, and when men are determined on mutiny, they are deaf to reason. He bluntly replied, that there was no time for further consultations. "Embark immediately or remain in God's name, were the only alternatives." "For my part," said he, turning his back upon the admiral, and elevating his voice so that it resounded all over the vessel, "I am for Castile! those who choose may follow me!" shouts arose immediately from all sides, "I will follow you! and I! and I!" Numbers of the

crew sprang upon the ship brandishing weapons and uttering mingled threats and cries of rebellion. Some called upon Porras for orders what to do; others shouted "To Castile! to Castile!" while, amidst the general uproar, the voices of some desperados were heard menacing the life of the admiral.

Columbus, hearing the tumult, leaped from his bed, ill and infirm as he was, and tottered out of the cabin, stumbling and falling in the exertion, hoping by his presence to pacify the mutineers. Three or four of his faithful adherents, however, fearing some violence might be offered him, threw themselves between him and the throng, and taking him in their arms, compelled him to return to his cabin.

The Adelantado had likewise sallied forth, but in a different mood. He had planted himself, with lance in hand, in a situation to take the whole brunt of the assault. It was with the greatest difficulty that several of the loyal part of the crew could appease his fury, and prevail upon him to relinquish his weapon, and retire to the cabin of his brother. They now entreated

Porras and his companions to depart peaceably, since no one sought to oppose them. No advantage could be gained by violence; but should they cause the death of the admiral, they would draw upon themselves the severest punishment from the sovereigns *.

These representations moderated the turbulence of the mutineers, and they now proceeded to carry their plans into execution. Taking ten canoes which the admiral had purchased of the Indians, they embarked in them with as much exultation as if certain of immediately landing on the shores of Spain. Others, who had not been concerned in the mutiny, seeing so large a force departing, and fearing to remain behind, when so reduced in number, hastily collected their effects, and entered likewise into the canoes. In this way forty-eight abandoned the admiral. Many of those who remained were only detained by sickness, for, had they been well, most of them would have accompanied the deserters †. The few who remained faithful to the admiral, and the sick, who crawled forth from their cabins, saw the departure of the

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind., l. ii., cap. 32. Hist. del Almirante, cap. 102.

† Hist del Almirante, cap. 102.

mutineers with tears and lamentations, giving themselves up for lost. Notwithstanding his malady, Columbus left his bed, mingling among those who were loyal, and visiting those who were ill, endeavouring in every way to cheer and comfort them. He entreated them to put their trust in God, who would yet relieve them; and he promised, on his return to Spain, to throw himself at the feet of the queen, represent their loyalty and constancy, and obtain for them rewards that should compensate for all their sufferings *.

In the mean time Francisco de Porras and his followers, in their squadron of canoes, coasted the island to the eastward, following the route taken by Mendez and Fiesco. Wherever they landed, they committed the greatest wrongs and outrages upon the Indians, robbing them of their provisions, and of whatever they coveted of their effects. They endeavoured to make their own crimes redound to the prejudice of Columbus, pretending to act under his authority, and affirming that he would pay for every thing that they took. If he refused, they told the natives to kill

* Las Casas, l. ii., cap. 32.

him. They represented him as an implacable foe to the Indians; as one who had tyrannized over other islands, causing the misery and death of the natives, and who only sought to gain a sway here for the purpose of inflicting like calamities.

Having reached the eastern extremity of the island, they waited until the weather should be perfectly calm, before they ventured to cross the gulf. Unskilled as they were in the management of canoes, they procured several Indians to accompany them. The sea being at length quite smooth, they set forth upon their voyage. Scarcely, however, had they proceeded four leagues from land when a contrary wind arose, and the waves began to swell. They turned immediately for shore. The canoes, from their light structure, and their keels being nearly round, were easily overturned, and required to be carefully balanced. They were now deeply freighted by men unaccustomed to them, and as the sea rose, they frequently let in the water. The Spaniards were alarmed, and endeavoured to lighten them, by throwing overboard every thing that could be spared; retaining only their arms, and a part of

their provisions. The danger augmented with the wind. They now compelled the Indians to leap into the sea, excepting such as were absolutely necessary to navigate the canoes. If they hesitated, they drove them overboard with the edge of the sword. The Indians were skilful swimmers, but the distance to land was too great for their strength. They kept about the canoes, therefore, taking hold of them occasionally to rest themselves and recover breath. As their weight disturbed the balance of the canoes, and endangered their overturning, the Spaniards cut off their hands, and stabbed them with their swords. Some died by the weapons of these cruel men, others were exhausted and sank beneath the waves; thus eighteen perished miserably, and none survived, but such as had been retained to manage the canoes*.

When the Spaniards got back to land, different opinions arose as to what course they should next pursue. Some were for crossing to Cuba, for which island the wind was favourable. From thence, it was thought they might easily cross to

* Hist. del Almirante, c. 102. Las Casas, l. ii., c. 32.

the end of Hispaniola. Others advised that they should return and make their peace with the admiral, or take from him what remained of arms and stores, having thrown almost every thing overboard during their late danger. Others counselled another attempt to cross over to Hispaniola, as soon as the sea should become tranquil.

This last advice was adopted. They remained for a month at an Indian village near the eastern point of the island, living on the substance of the natives, and treating them in the most arbitrary and capricious manner. When at length the weather became serene, they made a second attempt, but were again driven back by adverse winds. Losing all patience therefore, and despairing of the enterprise, they abandoned their canoes, and returned westward; wandering from village to village, a dissolute and lawless gang, supporting themselves by fair means or foul, according as they met with kindness or hostility, and passing like a pestilence through the island *.

* Hist. del Almirante, c. 102. Las Casas, l. ii., c. 32.

CHAPTER III.

SCARCITY OF PROVISIONS. STRATAGEM OF COLUMBUS TO OBTAIN SUPPLIES FROM THE NATIVES.

[1504.]

While Porras and his crew were ranging about with that desperate and joyless licentiousness which attends the abandonment of principle, Columbus presented the opposite picture of a man supported by conscious rectitude, and true to others and to himself. When he saw the crews depart which bore away the healthful and vigorous portion of his garrison, he exerted himself to encourage the infirm and desponding remnant which remained. There were but few capable of wielding arms in case of an attack, and none to spare from the attendance on the sick and the guarding of the wreck, to forage about in search of provisions. Regardless of his own painful maladies, he was incessant in his attention to alleviate the sufferings and re-establish the healths of his followers. By scru-

pulous good faith and amicable conduct towards the natives, and by a judicious use of the articles of traffic which remained, he procured, from time to time, considerable supplies of provisions. The most palatable and nourishing of these, together with the small stock of European biscuit that remained, he ordered to be appropriated to the sustenance of the infirm. Knowing how much the body is affected by the operations of the mind, he endeavoured to rouse the spirits, and animate the hopes, of the drooping sufferers. Concealing his own anxiety, he maintained a serene and even cheerful countenance, encouraging his men by kind words, and holding forth confident anticipations of speedy relief. By his friendly and careful treatment, Columbus soon recruited both the health and spirits of his people, and brought them all into a condition to contribute to the common safety. Judicious regulations, calmly, but firmly enforced, maintained every thing in order. The men became sensible of the advantages of wholesome discipline, and perceived that the restraints imposed upon them by their commander were for

their own good, and ultimately productive of their own comfort.

Columbus had thus succeeded in guarding against the internal ills that threatened the safety of his little community, when alarming evils began to menace from without. The Indians being an improvident race, unused to lay up any stock of provisions, and unwilling to subject themselves to extra labour, found it difficult to furnish the quantity of food daily required for so many hungry men. The European trinkets, once so precious, lost their value, in proportion as they became common. The importance of the admiral had been greatly diminished by the desertion of so many of his followers; and the malignant instigations of the rebels had awakened jealousy and enmity in several of the villages, which had been accustomed to furnish provisions.

By degrees, therefore, the supplies began to fall off. The arrangements for the daily delivery of certain quantities, made by Diego Mendez, were irregularly attended to, and at length ceased entirely. The Indians no longer thronged to the

harbour with provisions, and often refused them when applied for. The Spaniards were obliged to forage about the neighbourhood for their daily food, but found more and more difficulty in procuring it; and now, in addition to their other causes for despondency, they began to entertain horrible apprehensions of famine.

The admiral heard the melancholy forebodings of his men, and beheld the growing evil, but was at a loss for a remedy. To resort to force was an alternative full of danger, and of but temporary efficacy. It would require all those who were well enough to bear arms to sally forth, while he and the rest of the infirm would be left defenceless on board of the wreck, exposed to the vengeance of the natives.

In the mean time, the scarcity daily increased. The Indians perceived the wants of the white men, and had learnt from them the art of making bargains. They asked ten times the former quantity of European articles for any amount of provisions, and brought their supplies in scanty quantities, to enhance the eagerness of the hungry Spaniards.

At length, even this relief ceased, and there was an absolute distress for want of food. It appeared that the jealousy of the natives had been universally aroused by Porras and his followers, and they withheld all provisions, in hopes either of starving the admiral and his people, or of driving them from the island.

In this extremity, a fortunate idea suddenly presented itself to Columbus. From his knowledge of astronomy, he ascertained that, within three days, there would be a total eclipse of the moon in the early part of the night. He sent, therefore, an Indian of the island of Hispaniola, who served as his interpreter, to summon the principal caciques to a grand conference, appointing for it the day of the eclipse. When all were assembled, he told them by his interpreter, that he and his followers were the worshippers of a Deity who lived in the skies. That this Deity favoured such as did well, but punished all transgressors. That as they must all have noticed, he had protected Diego Mendez and his companions in their voyage, they having gone in obedience to the orders of their commander;

but that, on the other hand, he had visited Porras and his companions with all kind of afflictions, in consequence of their rebellion. That this great Deity was incensed against the Indians who had refused or neglected to furnish his faithful worshippers with provisions, and intended to chastise them with famine and pestilence. Lest they should disbelieve this warning, a signal would be given that very night, in the heavens. They would behold the moon change its colour, and gradually lose its light ; a token of the fearful punishment which awaited them.

Many of the Indians were alarmed at the solemnity of this prediction, others treated it with derision,—all, however, awaited with solicitude the coming of the night. When they beheld a dark shadow stealing over the moon, they began to tremble. Their fears increased with the progress of the eclipse ; and when they saw a mysterious darkness covering the whole face of nature, there were no bounds to their terror. Seizing upon whatever provisions they could procure, they hurried to the ships, uttering cries and lamentations. They threw themselves at the feet

of Columbus, implored him to intercede with his God to withhold the threatened calamities, and assured him that thenceforth they would bring him whatever he required. Columbus told them he would retire and commune with the Deity. Shutting himself up in his cabin, he remained there during the increase of the eclipse, the forests and shores all the while resounding with the howlings and supplications of the savages. When the eclipse was about to diminish, he came forth and informed the natives that he had interceded for them with his God, who, on condition of their fulfilling their promises, had deigned to pardon them; in sign of which he would withdraw the darkness from the moon.

When the Indians saw that planet restored presently to its brightness, and rolling in all its beauty through the firmament, they overwhelmed the admiral with thanks for his intercession and repaired to their homes, joyful at having escaped such great disasters. They now regarded Columbus with awe and reverence, as a man in the peculiar favour and confidence of the Deity, since he knew upon earth what was passing in the

heavens. They hastened to propitiate him with gifts, supplies again arrived daily at the harbour, and from that time forward, there was no want of provisions*.

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 103. Las Casas, Hist. Ind., l. ii., c. 33.

CHAPTER IV.

MISSION OF DIEGO DE ESCOBAR TO THE ADMIRAL.

[1504.]

Eight months had now elapsed since the departure of Mendez and Fiesco, yet no tidings had been received of their fate. For a long time the Spaniards had kept a wistful look-out upon the ocean, flattering themselves that every Indian canoe, gliding at a distance, might be the harbinger of deliverance. The hopes of the most sanguine were now fast sinking into despondency. What thousand perils awaited such frail barks, and so weak a party, on an expedition of the kind. Either the canoes had been swallowed up by boisterous waves and adverse currents, or their crews had perished among the rugged mountains and savage tribes of Hispaniola. To increase their despondency, they were informed that a vessel had been seen, bottom upwards, drifting with the currents along the coasts of Jamaica. This might be the vessel sent to their relief; and if so, all

their hopes were shipwrecked with it. This rumour, it is affirmed, was invented and circulated in the island by the rebels, that it might reach the ears of those who remained faithful to the admiral, and reduce them to despair*. It no doubt had its effect. Losing all hope of aid from a distance, and considering themselves abandoned and forgotten by the world, many of the men grew wild and desperate in their plans. Another conspiracy was formed by one Bernardo, an apothecary of Valentia, with two confederates, Alonzo de Zamora and Pedro de Villatoro. They designed to imitate the attempt of Porras, to seize upon the remaining canoes, and seek their way to Hispaniola †.

The mutiny was on the very point of breaking out, when one evening, towards dusk, a sail was seen standing towards the harbour. The transports of the poor Spaniards may be more easily conceived than described. The vessel was of small size; it kept out to sea, but sent its boat to visit the ships. Every eye was eagerly bent to

* Hist. del Almirante, c. 104.

† Las Casas, Hist. Ind., lib. ii., c. 33.

hail the countenances of Christians and deliverers. As the boat approached, they descried in it Diego de Escobar, a man who had been one of the most active confederates of Roldan in his rebellion, who had been condemned to death under the administration of Columbus, and pardoned by his successor Bobadilla. There was bad omen in such a messenger.

Coming along side of the ships, Escobar put a letter on board from Ovando, governor of Hispaniola, together with a barrel of wine and a side of bacon, sent as presents to the admiral. He then drew off, and talked with Columbus from a distance. He told him that he was sent by the governor to express his great concern at his misfortunes, and his regret at not having in port a vessel of sufficient size to bring off himself and his people, but that he would send one as soon as possible. Escobar gave the admiral assurances likewise, that his concerns in Hispaniola had been faithfully attended to. He requested him, if he had any letter to write to the governor in reply, to give it to him as soon as possible, as he wished to return immediately.

There was something extremely singular in this mission, but there was no time for comments, Escobar was urgent to depart. Columbus hastened, therefore, to write a reply to Ovando couched in the most friendly terms, depicting the dangers and distresses of his situation, increased as they were by the rebellion of Porras, but expressing his reliance on his promise to send him relief, confiding in which he should remain patiently on board of his wreck. He recommended Diego Mendez and Bartholomew Fiesco to his favour, assuring him that they were not sent to San Domingo with any artful design, but simply to represent his perilous situation, and to apply for succour*. When Escobar received this letter, he returned immediately on board of his vessel, which made all sail, and soon disappeared in the gathering gloom of the night.

If the Spaniards had hailed the arrival of this vessel with transport, its sudden departure, and the mysterious conduct of Escobar inspired no less wonder and consternation. He had kept aloof from all communication with them, as if he felt no interest in their welfare, or sympathy in

* Las Casas, l. ii., c. 34.

their misfortunes. Columbus saw the gloom that had gathered in their countenances, and feared the consequences. He eagerly sought, therefore, to dispel their suspicions, professing himself satisfied with the communications received from Ovando, and assuring them that vessels would soon arrive to take them all away. In confidence of this, he said, he had declined to depart with Escobar, because his vessel was too small to take the whole, preferring to remain with them and share their lot, and had despatched the caravel in such haste that no time might be lost in expediting the necessary ships. These assurances, and the certainty that their situation was known in San Domingo, cheered the hearts of the people. Their hopes again revived, and the conspiracy, which had been on the point of breaking forth, was completely disconcerted.

In secret, however, Columbus was exceedingly indignant at the conduct of Ovando. He had left him for many months in a state of the utmost danger, and most distressing uncertainty, exposed to the hostilities of the natives, the seditions of his men, and the suggestions of his own despair. He

had, at length, sent a mere tantalizing message, by a man known to be one of his bitterest enemies, with a present of food, which, from its scantiness, seemed intended to mock their necessities.

Columbus believed that Ovando had purposely neglected him, hoping that he would perish on the island, being apprehensive that, should he return in safety, he would be reinstated in the government of Hispaniola: and he considered Escobar merely as a spy sent by the governor to ascertain the state of himself and his crew, and whether they were yet in existence. Las Casas, who was then at San Domingo, expresses similar suspicions. He says that Escobar was chosen because Ovando was certain that, from ancient enmity, he would have no sympathy for the admiral. That he was ordered not to go on board of the vessels, nor to land, neither was he to hold conversation with any of the crew, or receive any letters, except those of the admiral. In a word, that he was a mere scout to collect information*.

Others have ascribed the long neglect of Ovando to extreme caution. There was a rumour preva-

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind., l. ii., c. 33. Hist. del Almirante, cap. 103.

lent that Columbus, irritated at the suspension of his dignities by the court of Spain, intended to transfer his newly-discovered countries into the hands of his native republic, Genoa, or of some other power. Such rumours had long been current, and to their recent circulation Columbus himself alludes in his letter sent to the sovereigns by Diego Mendez. The most plausible apology given, is, that Ovando was absent for several months in the interior, occupied in wars with the natives, and that there were no ships at San Domingo of sufficient burden to take Columbus and his crew to Spain. He may have feared that, should they come to reside for any length of time on the island, either the admiral would interfere in public affairs, or endeavour to make a party in his favour; or that, in consequence of the number of his old enemies still resident there, former scenes of faction and turbulence might be revived*. In the mean time the situation of Columbus in Jamaica, while it disposed of him quietly until vessels should arrive from Spain, could not, he may have thought, be hazardous. He had sufficient

* Las Casas, ubi sup. Hist. del Almirante, ubi sup.

force and arms for defence, and he had made amicable arrangements with the natives for the supply of provisions, as Diego Mendez, who had made those arrangements, had no doubt informed him. Such may have been the reasoning by which Ovando, under the real influence of his interest, may have reconciled his conscience to a measure that excited the strong reprobation of his contemporaries, and has continued to draw upon him the suspicions of mankind.

CHAPTER V.

VOYAGE OF DIEGO MENDEZ AND BARTHOLOMEW FIESCO IN A CANOE TO HISPANIOLA.

[1504.]

It is proper to give here some account of the mission of Diego Mendez and Bartholomew Fiesco, and of the circumstances which prevented the latter from returning to Jamaica. When they had taken leave of the Adelantado at the east end of the island, they continued all day in a direct course, animating the Indians who navigated their canoes, and who frequently paused at their labour. There was no wind, the sky was without a cloud, and the sea perfectly calm; the heat, therefore, became intolerable. They had no shelter from the sun, whose burning rays were reflected from the surface of the ocean, and seemed to scorch their very eyes. The Indians, exhausted by heat and toil, would often leap into the water to cool their glowing bodies and refresh themselves, and, after remaining there a short time, would return with new

vigour to their labours. At the going down of the sun they lost sight of land. During the night the Indians took turns, one half to row while the others slept. The Spaniards, in like manner, divided their forces: while one half took repose, the others kept guard with their weapons in hand, ready to defend themselves in case of any perfidy on the part of their savage companions.

Watching and toiling in this way through the night, they were exceedingly fatigued at the return of day. They beheld nothing around them but sea and sky. Their frail canoes, heaving up and down with the swelling and sinking of the ocean, seemed scarcely capable of sustaining the broad undulations of a calm; how would they be able to live amidst the waves and surges, should the wind arise? The commanders did all they could to keep up the flagging spirits of the men. Sometimes they permitted them a respite; at other times they took the paddles and shared their toils. But labour and fatigue were soon forgotten in a new source of suffering. During the preceding sultry day and night, the Indians, parched and fatigued, had drank up all the water. They

now began to experience the torments of thirst. In proportion as the sun arose their thirst increased; the calm, which favoured the navigation of the canoes, rendered this misery the more intense. There was not a breeze to fan the air, or counteract the ardent rays of a tropical sun. Their sufferings were irritated by the prospect around them—nothing but water, while they were perishing with thirst. At mid-day their strength failed them, and they could work no longer. Fortunately, at this time the commanders of the canoes found, or pretended to find, two small kegs of water, which they had perhaps secretly reserved for such an extremity. Administering the precious contents from time to time, in sparing mouthfuls to their companions, and particularly to the labouring Indians, they enabled them to resume their toils. They cheered them with the hopes of soon arriving at a small island called Navasa, which lay directly in their way, and was only eight leagues from Hispaniola. Here they would be able to procure water to allay their thirst, and might take repose.

For the rest of the day they continued faintly and wearily labouring forward, and keeping an

anxious look out for the island. The day passed away, the sun went down, yet there was no sign of land, not even a cloud on the horizon that might deceive them into a hope. According to their calculations, they had certainly come the distance from Jamaica at which Navasa lay. They began to fear that they had deviated from their course. If so, they should miss the island entirely, and perish with thirst before they could reach Hispaniola.

The night closed upon them without any sight of the island. They now despaired of touching at it, for it was so small and low that, even if they were to pass near, they would scarcely be able to perceive it in the dark. One of the Indians sunk and died, under the accumulated sufferings of labour, heat, and raging thirst. His body was thrown into the sea. Others lay panting and gasping at the bottom of the canoes. Their companions, troubled in spirit, and exhausted in strength, feebly continued their toils. Sometimes they endeavoured to cool their parched palates by taking sea-water in their mouths, but its briny acrimony rather increased their thirst. Now and then, but very sparingly, they were allowed a drop of water

from the kegs; but this was only in cases of the utmost extremity, and principally to those who were employed in rowing. The night had far advanced, but those whose turn it was to take repose were unable to sleep, from the intensity of their thirst; or if they slept, it was but to be tantalized with dreams of cool fountains and running brooks, and to awaken in redoubled torment. The last drop of water had been dealt out to the Indian rowers, but it had only served to irritate their sufferings. They scarce could move their paddles; one after another gave up, and it seemed impossible that they should live to reach Hispaniola.

The commanders, by admirable management, had hitherto kept up this weary struggle with suffering and despair: they now, too, began to despond. Diego Mendez sat watching the horizon, which was gradually lighting up with those faint rays which precede the rising of the moon. As that planet arose, he perceived it to emerge from behind some dark mass elevated above the level of the ocean. He immediately gave the animating cry of "land." His almost expiring companions were roused by it to a new

life. It proved to be the island of Navasa, but so small, and low, and distant, that had it not been thus revealed by the rising of the moon, they would never have discovered it. The error in their reckoning with respect to the island, had arisen from miscalculating the rate of sailing of the canoes, from not making sufficient allowance for the fatigue of the rowers and for the opposition of the current.

New vigour was now diffused throughout the crews. They exerted themselves with feverish impatience; by the dawn of day they reached the land, and, springing on shore, returned thanks to God for such signal deliverance. The island was a mere mass of rocks half a league in circuit. There was neither tree, nor shrub, nor herbage, nor stream, nor fountain. Hurrying about, however, with anxious search, they found to their joy abundance of rain water in the hollows of the rocks. Eagerly scooping it up with their calabashes, they quenched their burning thirst by immoderate draughts. It was in vain that the more prudent warned the others of their danger. The Spaniards were in some degree restrained; but

the poor Indians, whose toils had increased the fever of their thirst, gave way to a kind of frantic indulgence. Several died upon the spot, and others fell dangerously ill *.

Having allayed their thirst, they now looked about in search of food. A few shell-fish were found along the shore, and Diego Mendez, striking a light, and gathering drift wood, they were enabled to boil them, and to make a delicious banquet. All day they remained reposing in the shade of the rocks, refreshing themselves after their intolerable sufferings, and gazing upon Hispaniola, whose mountains were seen rising above the horizon, at eight leagues' distance.

In the cool of the evening they once more embarked, invigorated by repose, and arrived safely at Cape Tiburon on the following day, the fourth since their departure from Jamaica. Here they landed on the banks of a beautiful river, where they were kindly received and treated by the natives. Such are the particulars, collected from

* Not far from the island of Navasa there gushes up in the sea a pure fountain of fresh water that sweetens the surface for some distance: this circumstance was of course unknown to the Spaniards at the time. (Oviedo, Cronica, l. vi., c. 12.)

different sources*, of this adventurous and interesting voyage, on the precarious success of which depended the deliverance of Columbus and his crews. The voyagers remained for two days among the hospitable natives on the banks of the river to refresh themselves. Fiesco would have returned to Jamaica, according to promise, to give assurance to the admiral and his companions of the safe arrival of their messenger; but both Spaniards and Indians had suffered so much during the voyage, that nothing could induce them to encounter the perils of a return in the canoes.

Parting with his companions, Diego Mendez took six Indians of the island, and set off resolutely to coast in his canoe one hundred and thirty leagues to San Domingo. After proceeding for eighty leagues, with infinite toil, always against the currents, and subject to perils from the native tribes, he was informed that the governor had departed for Xaragua, fifty leagues distant. Still undaunted by fatigues and difficulties, he abandoned his canoe, and proceeded alone and on foot

* Hist. del Almirante, c. 105. Las Casas, l. ii., c. 31. Testament of Diego Mendez. Navarrete, t. i.

through forests and over mountains, until he arrived at Xaragua, achieving one of the most perilous expeditions ever undertaken by a devoted follower for the safety of his commander.

Ovando received him with great kindness, expressing the utmost concern at the unfortunate situation of Columbus. He made many promises of sending immediate relief, but suffered day after day, week after week, and even month after month to elapse, without carrying his promises into effect. He was at that time completely engrossed with his wars with the natives, and had a ready plea, that there were no ships of sufficient burden at San Domingo. Had he felt a proper zeal, however, for the safety of a man like Columbus, it would have been easy, within eight months, to have devised some means, if not of delivering him from his situation, at least of conveying to him ample reinforcements and supplies.

The faithful Mendez remained for seven months in Xaragua, detained there under various pretexts by Ovando, who was unwilling that he should proceed to San Domingo; partly, as is intimated, from his having some jealousy of his being em-

ployed in secret agency for the admiral, and partly from a desire to throw impediments in the way of his obtaining the required relief. At length, by daily importunity, he obtained permission to go to San Domingo, and await the arrival of certain ships which were expected, of which he proposed to purchase one on the account of the admiral. He immediately set out on foot a distance of seventy leagues, part of his toilsome journey lying through forests and among mountains infested by hostile and exasperated Indians. It was after his departure that Ovando despatched the caravel commanded by the pardoned rebel Escobar, on that singular and equivocal visit, which, in the eyes of Columbus, had the air of a mere adventurous expedition to spy into the camp of an enemy.

CHAPTER VI.

OVERTURES OF COLUMBUS TO THE MUTINEERS. BATTLE OF THE ADELANTADO WITH PORRAS AND HIS FOLLOWERS.

[1503.]

When Columbus had soothed the disappointment of his men at the brief and unsatisfactory visit and sudden departure of the vessel of Escobar, he endeavoured to turn the event to some advantage with the rebels. He knew them to be disheartened by the inevitable miseries attending a lawless and dissolute life, that many longed to return to the safe and quiet path of duty, and that the most malignant, seeing how he had foiled all their intrigues among the natives to produce a famine, began to fear his ultimate triumph and his consequent vengeance. A favourable opportunity, he thought, now presented to take advantage of these feelings, and by gentle means to bring them back to their allegiance. He sent two of his people, therefore, who were most intimate with the rebels, to inform them of the recent arrival of a vessel

with letters from the Governor of Hispaniola, promising him a speedy deliverance from the island. He now offered a free pardon, kind treatment, and a passage with him in the expected ships, on condition of their immediate return to obedience. To convince them of the arrival of the vessel, he sent them a part of the bacon which had been brought by Escobar.

On the approach of these ambassadors, Francisco de Porras came forth to meet them, accompanied solely by a few of the ringleaders of his party. He imagined that there might be some propositions from the admiral, and he was fearful of their being heard by the mass of his people, who, in their dissatisfied and repentant mood, would be likely to desert him on the least prospect of pardon. Having listened to the tidings and overtures brought by the messengers, Porras and his confidential confederates consulted for some time together. Perfidious in their own nature, they suspected the sincerity of the admiral; and conscious of the extent of their offences, they doubted his having the magnanimity to pardon them. They determined, therefore, not to

confide in his proffered amnesty. They replied to the messengers, that they had no wish to return to the ships, but preferred living at large about the island. They offered to engage, however, to conduct themselves peaceably and amicably, on receiving a solemn promise from the admiral, that should two vessels arrive, they should have one to depart in; should but one arrive, the half of it should be granted to them, and that, moreover, the admiral should share with them the stores and the articles of Indian traffic which remained in the ships; they having lost all that they had, in the sea. When it was observed that these demands were extravagant and inadmissible, they replied insolently that, if they were not peaceably conceded, they would take them by force, and with this menace they dismissed the ambassadors*.

This conference was not conducted so privately, but that the rest of the rebels learnt the whole purport of the mission, and the offer of pardon and deliverance occasioned the greatest tumult and agitation. Porras, fearful of their desertion,

* Las Casas, l. ii., cap. 35. Hist. del Almirante, cap. 106.

had resort to all his eloquence, and to the most desperate falsehoods to delude them. He told them that these offers of the admiral were all deceitful, that he was naturally cruel and vindictive, and only sought to get them into his power to wreak on them his vengeance. He exhorted them to persist in their opposition to his tyranny; reminding them, that those who had formerly done so in Hispaniola, had eventually triumphed, and sent him home in irons; he assured them that they might do the same, and he again made vaunting promises of protection in Spain, through the influence of his relatives. But the boldest of his assertions was with respect to the caravel of Escobar. It shews the ignorance of the age, and the superstitious awe which the common people entertained with respect to Columbus and his astronomical knowledge. Porras assured them that no real caravel had arrived; that it was a mere phantasm conjured up by the admiral, who was deeply versed in necromancy. In proof of this, he adverted to its arriving in the dusk of the evening: its holding communication with no one but the admiral, and its sudden disappearance in

the night. Had it been a real caravel, the people of it would have sought to talk with their countrymen; the admiral, his son and brother would have eagerly embarked on board, and it would at any rate have remained a little while in port, and not have vanished so suddenly and mysteriously*.

By these, and similar delusions, Porras succeeded in working upon the feelings and credulity of his followers. Fearful, however, that they might yield to after reflection, and to further offers from the admiral, he determined to involve them in some act of violence that should commit them beyond all hope of forgiveness. He marched them, therefore, one day, to an Indian village called Maima†, where afterwards was built a town called Seville, and which was about a quarter of a league from the ships. His intention is said to have been to plunder the stores remaining on board the wreck, and to take the admiral prisoner ‡.

Columbus had notice of the designs of the rebels, and of their approach. Being confined by

* Hist. del Almirante, cap. 106. Las Casas, l. ii., cap. 35.

† At present, Mammee Bay.

‡ Hist. del Almirante, ubi sup.

his infirmities, he sent his brother to endeavour with mild words to persuade them from their purpose, and to win them to obedience; but with sufficient force to resist any violence. The Adelantado, who was generally a man rather of deeds than of words, took with him fifty followers, several of them men of tried resolution, and ready to fight in any cause. They were well armed and full of courage, though many were pale and debilitated from recent sickness, and from long confinement to the ships. Arriving on the side of a hill, within a bow-shot of the village, the Adelantado discovered the rebels, and despatched the same two messengers to treat with them, who had already carried them the offer of pardon. Porras and his fellow leaders, however, would not permit them to approach. They confided in the superiority of their numbers, in their men being, for the most part, hardy sailors, rendered robust and vigorous by the roving life they had been leading in the forests and the open air. They knew that many of those who were with the Adelantado were men brought up in a softer mode of life. They pointed to their pale countenances,

and persuaded their followers that they were mere household men, fair-weather troops, who could never stand before them. They did not reflect that, with such men, pride and lofty spirit often more than supply the place of bodily force, and they forgot that their adversaries had the incalculable advantage of justice and law upon their side. Deluded by their words, their followers were excited to a transient glow of courage, and brandishing their weapons, refused to listen to the messengers.

Six of the stoutest of the rebels made a league to stand by one another and to attack the Adelantado, for, he being killed, the rest would be easily defeated. The main body formed themselves into a squadron, drawing their swords and shaking their lances. They did not wait to be assailed, but, uttering shouts and menaces, rushed upon the enemy. They were so well received, however, that at the first shock four or five were killed, most of them the confederates who had leagued to attack the Adelantado. The latter, with his own hand, killed Juan Sanchez, the same powerful mariner who had carried off the cacique Quibian, and Juan Barber also, who had first drawn a sword against

the admiral in this rebellion. The Adelantado with his usual vigour and courage was dealing his blows about him in the thickest of the affray, where several lay killed and wounded, when he was assailed by Francisco de Porras. The rebel with a blow of his sword cleft the buckler of Don Bartholomew, and wounded him in the hand which grasped it. The sword remained wedged in the shield, and before Porras could withdraw it, the Adelantado closed upon him, grappled him, and, being assisted by others, after a severe struggle, succeeded in taking him prisoner*.

When the rebels beheld their leader a captive, their transient courage was at an end, and they fled in confusion. The Adelantado would have pursued them, but was persuaded to let them escape with the punishment they had received; especially as it was necessary to guard against the possibility of an attack from the Indians.

The latter had taken arms and drawn up in battle array, gazing with astonishment at this fight between white men, but without taking part on either side. When the battle was over, they

* Hist. del Almirante, c. 107. Las Casas, Hist. Ind., l. ii., c. 35.

approached the field, gazing upon the dead bodies of the beings they had once fancied immortal. They were curious in examining the wounds made by the Christian weapons. Among the wounded insurgents was Pedro Ledesma, the same pilot who so bravely swam ashore at Veragua, to procure tidings of the colony. He was a man of prodigious muscular force and a hoarse deep voice. As the Indians, who thought him dead, were inspecting the wounds with which he was literally covered, he suddenly uttered an ejaculation in his tremendous voice, at the sound of which the savages fled in dismay. This man having fallen into a cleft or ravine, was not discovered by the white men until the dawning of the following day, having remained all that time without a drop of water. The number and severity of the wounds he had received appeared incredible, but they are mentioned by Fernando Columbus, who was an eye-witness, and by Las Casas who had the account from Ledesma himself. For want of proper remedies, his wounds were treated in the roughest manner; yet, through the aid of a most vigorous constitution, he completely recovered.

Las Casas conversed with him several years afterwards at Seville, when he obtained from him various particulars concerning this voyage of Columbus. Some few days after his conversation, however, he heard that Ledesma had fallen under the knife of an assassin*.

The Adelantado after his victory returned in triumph to the ships, where he was received by the admiral in the most affectionate manner; thanking him as his deliverer. He brought Porras and several of his followers prisoners. Of his own party only two had been wounded; himself in the hand, and the admiral's steward, who had received an apparently slight wound with a lance, equal to one of the most insignificant of those with which Ledesma was covered; yet, in spite of careful treatment, he died.

On the next day, the 20th of May, the fugitives sent a petition to the admiral, signed with all their names, in which, says Las Casas, they confessed all their misdeeds, and cruelties, and evil intentions, supplicating the admiral to have pity on them and pardon them for their rebellion, for

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind., l. ii., c. 35.

which God had already punished them. They offered to return to their obedience and to serve him faithfully in future, making an oath to that effect upon a cross and a missal, accompanied by an imprecation worthy of being recorded: "They hoped, should they break their oath, that no priest, or other Christian might ever confess them, that repentance might be of no avail, that they might be deprived of the holy sacraments of the church, that at their death they might receive no benefit from bulls or indulgences, that their bodies might be cast out into the fields like those of heretics and renegadoes, instead of being buried in holy ground; and that they might not receive absolution from the pope, nor from cardinals, nor archbishops, nor bishops, nor any other Christian priests*." Such were the awful imprecations by which these men endeavoured to add validity to an oath. The worthlessness of a man's word may always be known by the extragavant means he uses to enforce it.

The admiral saw by the abject nature of this petition, how completely the spirit of these misguided

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind., l. ii., c. 35.

men was broken; with his wonted magnanimity, he readily granted their prayer, and pardoned their offences; but on one condition, that their ringleader, Francisco Porras, should remain a prisoner.

As it was difficult to maintain so many persons on board of the ships, and as quarrels might take place between persons who had so recently been at blows, Columbus put the late followers of Porras under the command of a discreet and faithful man; and giving in his charge a quantity of European articles for the purpose of purchasing food of the natives, he directed him to forage about the island until the expected vessels should arrive.

At length, after a long year of alternate hope and despondency, the doubts of the Spaniards were joyfully dispelled by the sight of two vessels standing into the harbour. One proved to be a ship which had been hired and well victualled, at the expense of the admiral, by the faithful and indefatigable Diego Mendez; the other had been subsequently fitted out by Ovando, and put under the command of Diego de Salcedo, the admiral's agent employed to collect his rents in San Domingo.

The long neglect of Ovando to attend to the relief of Columbus had, it seems, roused the public indignation, insomuch that animadversions had been made upon his conduct even in the pulpits. This is affirmed by Las Casas, who was at San Domingo at the time. If the governor had really entertained hopes that, during the delay of relief, Columbus might perish in the island, the report brought back by Escobar must have completely disappointed him. No time was to be lost if he wished to claim any merit in his deliverance, or to avoid the disgrace of having totally neglected him. He exerted himself, therefore, at the eleventh hour, and despatched a caravel at the same time with the ship sent by Diego Mendez. The latter, having faithfully discharged this part of his mission, and seen the ships depart, proceeded to Spain on the further concerns of the admiral *.

* Some brief notice of the further fortunes of Diego Mendez may be interesting to the reader. When King Ferdinand heard of his faithful services, says Oviedo, he bestowed rewards upon Mendez, and permitted him to bear a canoe in his coat of arms, as a memento of his loyalty. He continued devotedly attached to the admiral, serving him zealously after his return to Spain, and during his last illness. Columbus retained the most grateful and affectionate sense of his fidelity. On his death-bed he promised Mendez, that, in reward for his services, he should be appointed principal Alguazil of the island of Hispaniola; an engagement which the admiral's son, Don Diego,

who was present, cheerfully undertook to perform. A few years afterwards, when the latter succeeded to the office of his father, Mendez reminded him of the promise, but Don Diego informed him that he had given the office to his uncle Don Bartholomew; he assured him, however, that he should receive something equivalent. Mendez shrewdly replied that the equivalent had better be given to Don Bartholomew, and the office to himself, according to agreement. The promise, however, remained unperformed, and Diego Mendez unrewarded. He was afterwards engaged on voyages of discovery in vessels of his own, but met with many vicissitudes, and appears to have died in impoverished circumstances. His last will, from which these particulars are principally gathered, was dated in Valladolid, the 19th of June, 1536, by which it is evident he must have been in the prime of life at the time of his voyage with the admiral. In this will he requested that the reward which had been promised to him should be paid to his children, by making his eldest son principal Alguazil for life of the city of San Domingo, and his other son lieutenant to the admiral for the same city. It does not appear whether this request was complied with under the successors of Don Diego.

In another clause of his will, he desired that a large stone should be placed upon his sepulchre, on which should be engraved, " Here lies the honourable Cavalier Diego Mendez, who served greatly the royal crown of Spain, in the conquest of the Indies, with the admiral Don Christopher Columbus, of glorious memory, who made the discovery; and afterwards by himself, with ships at his own cost. He died, &c. &c. Bestow in charity a Pater noster, and an Ave Maria."

He ordered that in the midst of this stone, there should be carved an Indian canoe, as given him by the king for armorial bearings in memorial of his voyage from Jamaica to Hispaniola, and above it should be engraved in large letters, the word " CANOA." He enjoined upon his heirs loyalty to the admiral (Don Diego Columbus), and his lady, and gave them much ghostly counsel, mingled with pious benedictions. As an heir-loom in his family, he bequeathed his library, consisting of a few volumes, which accompanied him in his wanderings; viz. " The Art of Holy Dying, by Erasmus; A Sermon of the same author, in Spanish; The Lingua and the Colloquies of the same; The History of Josephus; The Moral Philosophy of Aristotle; The Book of the Holy Land; A Book called the Contemplation of the Passion of our Saviour; A Tract on the Vengeance of the Death of Agamemnon, and several other short treatises." This curious and characteristic testament is in the archives of the Duke of Veragua, in Madrid.

BOOK XVII.

CHAPTER I.

ADMINISTRATION OF OVANDO IN HISPANIOLA. OPPRESSION OF THE NATIVES.

[1503.]

Before relating the return of Columbus to Hispaniola, it is proper to notice some of the principal occurrences in that island, which took place under the government of Ovando. A great crowd of adventurers of various ranks had thronged his fleet—eager speculators, credulous dreamers, and broken down gentlemen of desperate fortunes; all expecting to enrich themselves suddenly in an island where gold was to be picked up from the surface of the soil, or gathered from the mountain-brooks. They had scarcely landed, says Las Casas, who accompanied the expedition, when they all hurried off to the mines, which were about eight leagues distance. The roads swarmed like ant-hills, with adventurers of all classes. Every one had his knapsack

of biscuit or flour, and his mining implements on his shoulders. These hidalgos, or gentlemen, who had no servants to carry their burdens, bore them on their own backs, and lucky was he who had a horse for the journey; he would be able to bring back the greater load of treasure. They all set out in high spirits, eager who should first reach the golden land, thinking they had but to arrive at the mines, and collect riches; "for they fancied," says Las Casas, "that gold was to be gathered as easily and readily as fruit from the trees." When they arrived, however, they discovered, to their dismay, that it was necessary to dig painfully into the bowels of the earth—a labour to which most of them had never been accustomed; that it required experience and sagacity to detect the veins of ore; that, in fact, the whole process of mining was exceedingly toilsome, demanding vast patience, much experience, and, after all, being full of uncertainty. They digged eagerly for a time, but found no ore. They grew hungry, threw by their implements, sat down to eat, and then returned to work. It was all in vain. "Their labour," says Las Casas, "gave

them a keen appetite and quick digestion, but no gold." They soon consumed their provisions, exhausted their patience, cursed their infatuation, and in eight days set off drearily on their return along the roads they had lately trod so exultingly. They arrived at San Domingo without an ounce of gold, half famished, downcast, and despairing *. Such is too often the case of those who ignorantly engage in mining—of all speculations the most brilliant, promising, and fallacious.

Poverty soon fell upon these misguided men. They exhausted the little property they had brought from Spain. Many suffered extremely from hunger, and were obliged to exchange even their apparel for bread. Some formed connexions with the old settlers of the island, but the greater part were like men lost and bewildered, and just awakened from a dream. The miseries of the mind, as usual, heightened the sufferings of the body. Some wasted away and died broken-hearted; others were hurried off by raging fevers, so that there soon perished upwards of a thousand men.

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind., l. ii., c. 6.

Ovando was reputed a man of great prudence and sagacity, and he certainly took several judicious measures for the regulation of the island, and the relief of the colonists. He made arrangements for distributing the married persons and the families which had come out in his fleet, in four towns in the interior, granting them important privileges. He revived the drooping zeal for mining by reducing the royal share of the product from one-half to a third, and shortly after to a fifth; but he empowered the Spaniards to avail themselves, in the most oppressive manner, of the labour of the unhappy natives in working the mines. The charge of treating the natives with severity had been one of those chiefly urged against Columbus. It is proper, therefore, to notice, in this respect, the conduct of his successor, a man chosen for his prudence, and his supposed capacity to govern. It will be recollected, that when Columbus was in a manner compelled to assign lands to the rebellious followers of Francisco Roldan in 1499, he had made an arrangement, that the caciques in their vicinity should, in lieu of tribute, furnish a number of their subjects to assist

them in cultivating their estates. This, as has been observed, was the commencement of the disastrous system of repartimentos, or distributions of the Indians. When Bobadilla administered the government, he constrained the caciques to furnish a certain number of Indians to each Spaniard, for the purpose of working the mines, where they were employed like beasts of burden. He made an enumeration of the natives, to prevent evasion, reduced them into classes, and distributed them among the Spanish inhabitants. The enormous oppressions which ensued have been noticed. They roused the indignation of Isabella, and when Ovando was sent out to supersede Bobadilla, in 1502, the natives were pronounced free. They immediately refused to labour in the mines.

Ovando represented to the Spanish sovereigns, in 1503, that ruinous consequences resulted to the colony from this entire liberty granted to the Indians. He stated that the tribute could not be collected, for the Indians were lazy and improvident; that the natives could only be kept from vices and irregularities by occupation; that they now kept

aloof from the Spaniards, and from all instruction in the Christian faith.

The last representation had an influence with Isabella, and drew a letter from the sovereigns to Ovando in 1503, in which he was ordered to spare no pains to attach the natives to the Spanish nation and the catholic religion. To make them labour moderately, if absolutely essential to their own good; but to temper authority with persuasion and kindness. To pay them regularly and fairly for their labour, and to have them instructed in religion on certain days.

Ovando availed himself of the powers given him by this letter, in their fullest extent. He assigned to each Castilian a certain number of Indians, according to the quality of the applicant, the nature of the application, or his own pleasure. It was arranged in the form of an order on a cacique for a certain number of Indians, who were to be paid by their employer, and instructed in the catholic faith. The pay was so small as to be little better than nominal; the instruction was little more than the mere ceremony of baptism; and

the term of labour was at first six months, and then eight months in the year. Under cover of this hired labour, intended for the good both of their bodies and their souls, more intolerable toil was exacted from them, and more horrible cruelties were inflicted than in the worst days of Bobadilla. They were separated often the distance of several days' journey from their wives and children, doomed to intolerable labour of all kinds, extorted by the cruel infliction of the lash. For food they had the cassava-bread, an unsubstantial support for men obliged to labour; sometimes a scanty portion of pork was distributed among a great number of them — scarce a mouthful to each. When the Spaniards who superintended the mines were at their repast, says Las Casas, the famished Indians scrambled under the table, like dogs, for any bone that might be thrown to them. After they had gnawed and sucked it, they pounded it between stones and mixed it with their cassava-bread, that nothing of so precious a morsel might be lost. As to those who laboured in the fields, they never tasted either flesh or fish; a little cassava-bread and a few roots were their support.

While the Spaniards thus withheld the nourishment necessary to sustain their health and strength, they exacted a degree of labour sufficient to break down the most vigorous man. If the Indians fled from this incessant toil and barbarous coercion, and took refuge in the mountains, they were hunted out like wild beasts, scourged in the most inhuman manner, and laden with chains to prevent a second escape. Many perished long before their term of labour had expired. Those who survived their term of six or eight months, were permitted to return to their homes, until the next term commenced. But their homes were often forty, sixty, and eighty leagues distant. They had nothing to sustain them through the journey but a few roots or agi peppers, or a little cassava-bread. Worn down by long toil and cruel hardships, which their feeble constitutions were incapable of sustaining, many had not strength to perform the journey, but sank down and died by the way; some by the side of a brook, others under the shade of a tree, where they had crawled for shelter from the sun. "I have found many dead in the road," says Las Casas, "others gasp-

ing under the trees, and others in the pangs of death, faintly crying Hunger! hunger!*" Those who reached their homes most commonly found them desolate. During the eight months that they had been absent, their wives and children had either perished or wandered away; the fields on which they depended for food were overrun with weeds, and nothing was left them but to lie down, exhausted, and despairing, and die at the threshold of their habitations †.

It is impossible to pursue any further the picture drawn by the venerable Las Casas, not of what he had heard, but of what he had seen—nature and humanity revolt at the details. Suffice it to say that, so intolerable were the toils and sufferings inflicted upon this weak and unoffending race, that they sunk under them, dissolving as it were from the face of the earth. Many killed themselves in despair, and even mothers overcame the powerful instinct of nature, and destroyed the infants at their breasts, to spare them a life of wretchedness. Twelve years had not elapsed since

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind., l. ii., cap. 14. MS.

† Las Casas, ubi sup.

the discovery of the island, and several hundred thousand of its native inhabitants had perished, miserable victims to the grasping avarice of the white men.

CHAPTER II.

MASSACRE AT XARAGUA. FATE OF ANACAONA.

[1503.]

The sufferings of the natives under the civil policy of Ovando have been briefly shewn: it remains to give a concise view of the military operations of this commander, so lauded by certain of the early historians for his prudence. By this notice a portion of the eventful history of this island will be recounted which is connected with the fortunes of Columbus, and which comprises the thorough subjugation, and, it may almost be said, extermination of the native inhabitants. And first, we must treat of the disasters of the beautiful province of Xaragua, the seat of hospitality, the refuge of the suffering Spaniards, and of the fate of the female cacique Anacaona, once the pride of the island, and the generous friend of the white men.

Behechio, the ancient cacique of this province, being dead, Anacaona, his sister, had succeeded to the government. The marked partiality which

she had once manifested for the Spaniards had been greatly weakened by the general misery they had produced in her country, and by the brutal profligacy exhibited in her immediate dominions by the followers of Roldan. The unhappy story of the lover of her beautiful daughter Higuenamota with the young Spaniard Hernando de Guevara, had also caused her great affliction; and, finally, the various and enduring hardships inflicted on her once happy subjects by the grinding systems of labour enforced by Bobadilla and Ovando, had at length, it is said, converted her friendship into absolute detestation.

This disgust was kept alive and aggravated by the Spaniards who lived in her immediate neighbourhood, and had obtained grants of land there, a remnant of the rebel faction of Roldan, who retained the gross licentiousness and open profligacy in which they had been indulged under the loose misrule of that commander, and who made themselves odious to the inferior caciques, by exacting services tyrannically and capriciously under the baneful system of repartimentos.

The Indians of this province were uniformly

represented as being a more intelligent, polite, and generous-spirited race than any others of the islands. They were the more prone to feel and resent the overbearing and insulting treatment to which they were subjected. Quarrels sometimes took place between the caciques and their oppressors. These were immediately reported to the governor as dangerous mutinies; and a resistance to any capricious and extortionate exaction was magnified into a rebellious resistance to the authority of government. Complaints of this kind were continually pouring in upon Ovando, until he was persuaded by some alarmist, or some designing mischief-maker, that there was a deep-laid conspiracy among the Indians of this province to rise upon the Spaniards.

Ovando immediately set out for Xaragua at the head of three hundred foot soldiers, armed with swords, arquebuses, and cross-bows, and seventy horsemen, with cuirasses, bucklers, and lances. He pretended that he was going on a mere visit of friendship to Anacaona, and to make arrangements about the payment of tribute.

When Anacaona heard of the intended visit, she

sent to all her tributary caciques, and to all her principal subjects, to assemble at her chief town, that they might receive the commander of the Spaniards with becoming homage and distinction. As Ovando, at the head of his little army approached, she went forth to meet him, according to the custom of her nation, attended by a great train of her most distinguished subjects, male and female, who, as has been before observed, were noted for superior grace and beauty. They received the Spaniards with their popular areytos, their national songs; the young women waving palm branches and dancing before them, in the same way that had so much charmed the followers of the Adelantado, on his first visit to the province.

Anacaona treated the governor with that natural graciousness and dignity for which she was celebrated. She gave him the largest house in the place for his residence, and his people were quartered in the houses adjoining. For several days the Spaniards were entertained with all the natural luxuries that the province afforded. National songs and dances and games were performed for

their amusement, and there was every outward demonstration of the same hospitality, the same amity, that Anacaona had uniformly shown to white men.

Notwithstanding all this kindness, and notwithstanding her uniform integrity of conduct, and open generosity of character, Ovando was persuaded that Anacaona was secretly meditating a massacre of himself and his followers. Historians tell us nothing of the grounds for such a belief. It was too probably produced by the misrepresentations of the unprincipled adventurers who infested the province. Ovando should have paused and reflected before he acted upon it. He should have considered the improbability of such an attempt by naked Indians against so large a force of steel-clad troops, armed with European weapons; and he should have reflected upon the general character and conduct of Anacaona. At any rate, the example set repeatedly by Columbus and his brother the Adelantado, should have convinced him that it was a sufficient safeguard against the machinations of the natives, to seize upon their caciques and detain them as hostages. The policy of

Ovando, however, was of a more rash and sanguinary nature; he acted upon suspicion as upon conviction. He determined to anticipate the alleged plot by a counter-artifice, and to overwhelm this defenceless people in an indiscriminate and bloody vengeance.

As the Indians had entertained their guests with various national games, Ovando invited them in return to witness certain games of his country. Among these was a tilting match or joust with reeds; a chivalrous game which the Spaniards had learnt from the Moors of Granada. The Spanish cavalry, in those days, were as remarkable for the skilful management, as for the ostentatious caparison of their horses. Among the troops brought out from Spain by Ovando, one horseman had disciplined his steed to prance and curvet in time to the music of a viol*. The joust was appointed to take place on a Sunday after dinner, in the public square, before the house where Ovando was quartered. The cavalry and foot soldiers had their secret instructions. The former were to parade, not merely with reeds or blunted tilting

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind., l. ii., c. 9.

lances, but with weapons of a more deadly character. The foot soldiers were to come apparently as mere spectators, but likewise armed and ready for action at a concerted signal.

At the appointed time the square was crowded with the Indians, waiting to see this military spectacle. The caciques were assembled in the house of Ovando, which looked upon the square. None were armed; an unreserved confidence prevailed among them, totally incompatible with the dark treachery of which they were accused. To prevent all suspicion, and take off all appearance of sinister design, Ovando, after dinner, was playing at quoits with some of his principal officers, when the cavalry having arrived in the square, the caciques begged the governor to order the joust to commence*. Anacaona, and her beautiful daughter Higuamota, with several of her female attendants, were present and joined in the request.

Ovando left his game and came forward to a conspicuous place. When he saw that every thing was disposed according to his orders, he gave the fatal signal. Some say it was by taking

* Oviedo, Cronica de las Indias, lib. iii., c. 12.

hold of a piece of gold which was suspended about his neck *; others by laying his hand on the cross of Alcantara, which was embroidered on his habit †. A trumpet was immediately sounded. The house in which Anacaona and all the principal caciques were assembled was surrounded by soldiery, commanded by Diego Velesquez and Rodrigo Mexiatrillo, and no one was permitted to escape. They entered, and seizing upon the caciques, bound them to the posts which supported the roof. Anacaona was led forth a prisoner. The unhappy caciques were then put to horrible tortures, until some of them, in the extremity of anguish, were made to accuse their queen and themselves of the plot with which they were charged. When this cruel mockery of judicial form had been executed, instead of preserving them for after-examination, fire was set to the house, and all the caciques perished miserably in the flames.

While these barbarities were practised upon the chieftains, a horrible massacre took place

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind., l. ii., c. 9.

† Charlevoix, Hist. San Domingo, l. xxiv., p. 235.

among the populace. At the signal of Ovando, the horsemen rushed into the midst of the naked and defenceless throng, trampling them under the hoofs of their steeds, cutting them down with their swords, and transfixing them with their spears. No mercy was shewn to age or sex; it was a savage and indiscriminate butchery. Now and then a Spanish horseman, either through an emotion of pity, or an impulse of avarice, caught up a child, to bear it off in safety, but it was barbaronsly pierced by the lances of his companions. Humanity turns with horror from such atrocities, and would fain discredit them; but they are circumstantially and still more minutely recorded by the venerable bishop Las Casas, who was resident in the island at the time, and conversant with the principal actors in this tragedy. He may have coloured the picture strongly, in his usual indignation when the wrongs of the Indians are in question; yet, from all concurring accounts, and from many precise facts which speak for themselves, the scene must have been most sanguinary and atrocious. Oviedo, who is loud in extolling the justice, and devotion, and charity, and meek-

ness of Ovando, and his kind treatment of the Indians, and who visited the province of Xaragua a few years afterwards, records several of the preceding circumstances; especially the cold-blooded game of quoits played by the governor on the verge of such a horrible scene, and the burning of the caciques, to the number, he says, of more than forty. Diego Mendez, who was at Xaragua at the time, and doubtless present on such an important occasion, says incidentally in his last will and testament, that there were eighty-four caciques either burnt or hanged*. Las Casas says, that there were eighty who entered the house with Anacaona. The slaughter of the multitude must have been great; and this was inflicted on an unarmed and unresisting throng. Several who escaped from the massacre fled in their canoes to an island about eight leagues distant called Guanabo. They were pursued and taken, and condemned to slavery.

As to the princess Anacaona, she was carried in chains to San Domingo. The mockery of a trial was given her, in which she was found

* Relacion hecha por Don Diego Mendez. Naverrete Col., t. i. p. 314.

guilty on the confessions which had been wrung by tortures from her subjects, and on the testimony of their butchers; and she was ignominiously hanged in the presence of the people whom she had so long and so signally befriended*. Oviedo has sought to throw a stigma on the character of this unfortunate princess, accusing her of great licentiousness; but he was prone to criminate the character of the native princes who fell victims to the ingratitude and injustice of his countrymen. Contemporary writers of greater authority have concurred in representing Anacaona as remarkable for her native propriety and dignity. She was adored by her subjects, so as to hold a kind of dominion over them even during the lifetime of her brother: she is said to have been skilled in composing the areytos, or legendary ballads of her nation, and may have conduced much towards producing that superior degree of refinement remarked among her people. Her grace and beauty had made her renowned throughout the island, and had excited the admiration both of the savage and the Spa-

* Oviedo, Cronica de las Indias, l. iii., c. 12. Las Casas, Hist. Ind., l. ii., c. 9.

niard. Her magnanimous spirit was evinced in her amicable treatment of the white men, although her husband, the brave Caonabo, had perished a prisoner in their hands, and defenceless parties of them had been repeatedly in her power, and lived at large in her dominions. After having, for several years, neglected all safe opportunities of vengeance, she fell a victim to the absurd charge of having conspired against an armed force of nearly four hundred men, seventy of them horsemen, enough to have subjugated large armies of naked Indians.

After the massacre of Xaragua, the destruction of its inhabitants still continued. The favourite nephew of Anacaona, the cacique Guaora, who had fled to the mountains, was hunted like a wild beast, until he was taken, and likewise hanged. For six months the Spaniards continued ravaging the country with horse and foot, under pretext of quelling insurrections; for, wherever the affrighted natives took refuge in their despair, herding in dismal caverns and in the fastnesses of the mountains, they were represented as assembling in arms to make a head of rebellion. Having

at length hunted them out of their retreats, destroyed many, and reduced the survivors to the most deplorable misery and abject submission, the whole of that part of the island was considered as restored to good order; and in commemoration of this great triumph, Ovando founded a town near to the lake, which he called Santa Maria de la Verdadera Paz (St. Mary of the True Peace) *.

Such is the tragical history of the delightful region of Xaragua, and of its amiable and hospitable people. A place which the Europeans, by their own account, found a perfect paradise, but which, by their vile passions, they filled with horror and desolation.

* Oviedo, Cronica de las Indias, l. iii., c. 12.

CHAPTER III.

WAR WITH THE NATIVES OF HIGUEY.

[1504.]

THE subjugation of four of the Indian sovereignties of Hispaniola, and the disastrous fate of their caciques, has been already related. Under the administration of Ovando, was also accomplished the downfall of Higuey, the last of those independent districts; a fertile province which comprised the eastern extremity of the island.

The people of Higuey were of a more warlike spirit than those of the other provinces, having learned the effectual use of their weapons, from frequent contests with their Carib invaders. They were governed by a cacique named Cotabanama. Las Casas describes this chieftain from actual observation, and draws the picture of a native hero. He was, he says, the strongest of his tribe, and more perfectly formed than one man in a thousand of any nation whatever. He was taller in stature than the tallest of his countrymen, a yard

in breadth from shoulder to shoulder, and the rest of his body in admirable proportion. His aspect was not handsome, but grave and courageous. His bow was not easily bent by a common man, his arrows were three-pronged with the bones of fishes, and his weapons appeared to be intended for a giant. In a word, he was so nobly proportioned, as to be the admiration even of the Spaniards.

While Columbus was engaged in his fourth voyage, and shortly after the accession of Ovando to office, there was an insurrection of this cacique and his people. A shallop, with eight Spaniards, was surprized at the small island of Saona, adjacent to Higuey, and all the crew slaughtered. This was in revenge for the death of a cacique, torn to pieces by a dog wantonly set upon him by a Spaniard, and for which the natives had in vain sued for redress.

Ovando immediately despatched Juan de Esquibel, a courageous officer, at the head of four hundred men to quell the insurrection, and punish the massacre. Cotabanama assembled his warriors, and prepared for vigorous resistance. Distrust-

ful of the mercy of the Spaniards, the chieftain rejected all overtures of peace, and the war was prosecuted with some advantage to the natives. The Indians had now overcome their superstitious awe of the white men as supernatural beings, and though they could ill withstand the superiority of European arms, yet they manifested a courage and dexterity that rendered them enemies not to be despised. Las Casas and other historians relate a bold and romantic encounter between a single Indian and two mounted cavaliers named Valtenebro and Portevedra, in which the Indian, though pierced through the body by the lances and swords of both his assailants, retained his fierceness, and continued the combat, until he fell dead in possession of all their weapons *. This gallant action, says Las Casas, was public and notorious.

The Indians were soon defeated and driven to their mountain retreats. The Spaniards pursued them into their recesses, discovered their wives and children, wreaked on them the most indiscriminate slaughter, and committed their chieftains

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind., l. ii., c. 8.

to the flames. An aged female cacique of great distinction, named Higuanama, being taken prisoner, was hanged.

A detachment was sent in a caravel to the island of Saona, to take particular vengeance for the destruction of the shallop and its crew. The natives made a desperate defence and fled. The island was mountainous, and full of caverns, in which the Indians vainly sought for refuge. Six or seven hundred were imprisoned in a dwelling, and all put to the sword or poniarded. Those of the inhabitants who were spared were carried off as slaves; and thus, says Las Casas, was that island left desolate and deserted.

The natives of Higuey were driven to despair, seeing that there was no escape for them even in the bowels of the earth*: they sued for peace, which was granted them, and protection promised on condition of their cultivating a large tract of land, and paying a great quantity of bread in tribute. The peace being concluded, Cotabanama visited the Spanish camp, where his gigantic proportions and martial demeanour made him an

* Las Casas, ubi sup.

object of curiosity and admiration. He was received with great distinction by Esquibel, and they exchanged names; an Indian league of fraternity and perpetual friendship. The natives thenceforward called the cacique Juan de Esquibel, and the Spanish commander Cotabanama. Esquibel then built a wooden fortress in an Indian village near the sea, and left in it nine men, with a captain, named Martin de Villaman. After this, the troops dispersed, every man returning home, with his proportion of slaves gained in this expedition.

The pacification was not of long continuance. About the time that succours were sent to Columbus, to rescue him from the wrecks of his vessels at Jamaica, a new revolt broke out in Higuey, in consequence of the oppressions of the Spaniards, and a violation of the treaty made by Esquibel. Martin de Villaman demanded that the natives should not only raise the grain stipulated for by the treaty, but convey it to San Domingo, and he treated them with the greatest severity on their refusal. He connived also at the licentious conduct of his men towards the In-

dian women; the Spaniards often taking from the natives their daughters, their sisters, and even their wives*. The Indians, roused at last to fury, rose on their tyrants, slaughtered them, and burnt their wooden fortress to the ground. Only one of the Spaniards escaped, and bore the tidings of this catastrophe to the city of San Domingo.

Ovando gave immediate orders to carry fire and sword into the province of Higuey. The Spanish troops mustered from various quarters on the confines of that province, when Juan de Esquibel took the command, and had a great number of Indian warriors with him as allies. The towns of Higuey were generally built among the mountains. Those mountains rose in plains, or terraces, from ten to fifteen leagues in length and breadth; rough and rocky, interspersed with glens of a red soil, remarkably fertile, where they raised their cassava bread. The ascent from plain to plain was about fifty feet; steep and precipitous, formed of the living rock, and resembling a wall wrought with tools into rough

* Las Casas, ubi sup.

diamond points. Each village had four wide streets, a stone's throw in length, forming a cross; the trees being cleared away from them, and from a public square in the centre.

When the Spanish troops arrived on the frontiers, alarm-fires were made along the mountains by the natives, and columns of smoke spread the intelligence by day. The old men, the women, and children, were sent off to the secret places of the forests and caverns, and the warriors prepared for battle. The Castilians paused in one of the plains clear of forests, where their horses could be of use. They made prisoners of several of the natives, and tried to learn from them the plans and forces of the enemy. They applied tortures for the purpose, but in vain, so devoted was the loyalty of these people to their caciques. The Spaniards penetrated into the interior. They found the warriors of several towns assembled in one, and drawn up in the streets with their bows and arrows, but perfectly naked, and without defensive armour. They uttered tremendous yells, and discharged a shower of arrows; but from such

a distance, that they fell short of their foe. The Spaniards replied with their cross-bows, and with two or three arquebuses, for at this time they had but few fire-arms. When the Indians saw several of their comrades fall dead, they took to flight, rarely waiting for the attack with swords : some of the wounded, in whose bodies the arrows from the cross-bows had penetrated to the very feather, drew them out with their hands, broke them with their teeth, and hurling them at the Spaniards with impotent fury, fell dead upon the spot.

The whole force of the Indians was routed and dispersed, each family, or band of neighbours, fled in its own direction, and concealed itself in the fastness of the mountains. The Spaniards pursued them, but found the chase difficult amidst the close forests, and the broken and stony heights. They took several prisoners as guides, and inflicted incredible torments on them to compel them to betray their countrymen. They drove them before them, secured by cords fastened round their necks; and some of them, as they passed along the brinks of precipices, suddenly threw themselves headlong down, in hopes of dragging after them

the Spaniards. When at length the pursuers came upon the unhappy Indians in their concealments, they spared neither age nor sex; even pregnant women, and mothers with infants in their arms, fell beneath their merciless swords. The cold-blooded acts of cruelty which followed this first slaughter, it would be shocking to relate.

From hence Esquibel marched to attack the town where Cotabanama resided, and where that cacique had collected a great force to resist him. He proceeded direct for the place along the sea-coast, and came to where two roads led up the mountain to the town. One of the roads was open and inviting; the branches lopped, and all the underwood cleared away. Here the Indians had stationed an ambuscade to take the Spaniards in the rear. The other road was almost closed up by trees and bushes cut down and thrown across each other. Esquibel was wary and distrustful; he suspected the stratagem, and chose the encumbered road. The town was about a league and a half from the sea. The Spaniards made their way with great difficulty for the first half league. The rest of the road was free from all embarrassment,

which confirmed their suspicion of a stratagem. They now advanced with great rapidity, and, having arrived near the village, they suddenly turned into the other road, took the party in ambush by surprise, and made great havoc among them with their cross-bows.

The warriors now sallied from their concealment, others rushed out of the houses into the streets, and discharged flights of arrows, but from such a distance as generally to fall harmless. They then approached nearer, and hurled stones with their hands, being unacquainted with the use of slings. Instead of being dismayed at seeing their companions fall, it rather increased their fury, and they uttered the most fearful yells. An irregular battle, probably little else than wild skirmishing and brisk fighting, was kept up from two o'clock in the afternoon until night. Las Casas was present on the occasion, and, from his account, the Indians must have shown instances of great personal bravery, though the inferiority of their weapons, and the want of all defensive armour, rendered their valour totally ineffectual. As the evening shut in, their hostilities gradually ceased,

and they disappeared in the profound gloom and close thickets of the surrounding forest. A deep silence succeeded to their yells and war-whoops, and throughout the night the Spaniards remained in undisturbed possession of the village.

CHAPTER IV.

CLOSE OF THE WAR WITH HIGUEY. FATE OF COTABANAMA.

[1504.]

On the morning after the battle, not an Indian was to be seen. Finding that even their great chief, Cotabanama, was incapable of vying with the prowess of the white men, they had given up the contest in despair, and had all fled to the mountains. The Spaniards, separating into small parties, hunted them like wild beasts; their object was to seize the caciques, and, above all, Cotabanama. They explored all the glens and concealed paths that led into the wild recesses where the fugitives had taken refuge. The Indians were cautious and stealthy in their mode of retreating, treading in each other's foot-prints, so that twenty would make no more track than one, and stepping so lightly as scarce to disturb the herbage; yet there were Spaniards so skilled in hunting Indians, that they could trace them even by the

turn of a withered leaf, and among the confused tracks of a thousand animals.

They could scent afar off, also, the smoke of the fires which the Indians made whenever they halted, and thus they would come upon them in their most secret haunts. Sometimes they would hunt down a straggling Indian, and compel him, by torments, to betray the hiding-place of his companions, binding him and driving him before them as a guide. Wherever they discovered one of these places of refuge, filled with the aged and the infirm, with feeble women and helpless children, they massacred them without mercy. They wished to inspire terror throughout the land, and to frighten the whole tribe into submission. They cut off the hands of those whom they took roving at large, and sent them, as they said, to deliver them as letters to their friends, demanding their surrender. Numberless were those, says Las Casas, whose hands were amputated in this manner, and many of them sank down and died by the way, through anguish and loss of blood.

The conquerors delighted in exercising strange and ingenious cruelties. They mingled horrible

levity with their bloodthirstiness. They erected gibbets long and low, so that the feet of the sufferers might reach the ground, and their death be lingering. They hanged thirteen together, in reverence, says the indignant Las Casas, of our blessed Saviour and the twelve apostles. While their victims were suspended, and still living, they hacked them with their swords, to prove the strength of their arms and the edge of their weapons. They wrapped them in dry straw, and setting fire to it, terminated their existence by the fiercest agony.

These are horrible details, yet a veil is drawn over others still more detestable. They are related by the venerable Las Casas, who was an eye-witness of the scenes he describes. He was young at the time, but records them in his advanced years. "All these things," says he, "and others revolting to human nature, my own eyes beheld; and now I almost fear to repeat them, scarce believing myself, or whether I have not dreamt them *."

These details would have been withheld from the present work as disgraceful to human nature,

* Las Casas, lib. ii., cap. 17. MS.

and from an unwillingness to advance anything that might convey a stigma upon a brave and generous nation. But it would be a departure from historical veracity, having the documents before my eyes, to pass silently over transactions so atrocious, and vouched for by witnesses beyond all suspicion of falsehood. Such occurrences show the extremity to which human cruelty may extend, when stimulated by avidity of gain, by a thirst of vengeance, or even by a perverted zeal in the holy cause of religion. Every nation has in turn furnished proofs of this disgraceful truth. As in the present instance, they are commonly the crimes of individuals rather than of the nation. Yet it behoves governments to keep a vigilant eye upon those to whom they delegate power in remote and helpless colonies. It is the imperious duty of the historian to place these matters upon record, that they may serve as warning beacons to future generations.

Juan de Esquibel found that, with all his severities, it would be impossible to subjugate the tribe of Higuey, as long as the cacique Cotabanama was at large. That chieftain had retired to the little

island of Saona, about two leagues from the coast of Higuey, in the centre of which, amidst a labyrinth of rocks and forests, he had taken shelter with his wife and children in a vast cavern.

A caravel, which had recently arrived from the city of San Domingo with supplies for the camp, was employed by Esquibel to entrap the cacique. He knew that the latter kept a vigilant look out, stationing scouts upon the lofty rocks of his island to watch the movements of the caravel; Esquibel departed by night, therefore, in the vessel, with fifty followers, and, keeping under the deep shadows cast by the land, arrived at Saona unperceived, at the dawn of morning. Here he anchored close in with the shore, hid by its cliffs and forests, and landed forty men, before the spies of Cotabanama had taken their station. Two of these were surprised and brought to Esquibel, who, having learnt from them that the cacique was at hand, poniarded one of the spies, and bound the other, making him serve as guide.

A number of Spaniards ran in advance, each anxious to signalise himself by the capture of the cacique. They came to two roads, and the whole

party pursued that to the right, excepting one Juan Lopez, a powerful man, skilful in Indian warfare. He proceeded in a footpath to the left, winding among little hills, so thickly wooded, that it was impossible to see any one at the distance of half a bow-shot. Suddenly, in a narrow pass, overshadowed by rocks and trees, he encountered twelve Indian warriors, armed with bows and arrows, and following each other in single file according to their custom. The Indians were confounded at the sight of Lopez, imagining that there must be a party of soldiers behind him. They might readily have transfixed him with their arrows, but they had lost all presence of mind. He demanded their chieftain. They replied that he was behind, and, opening to let him pass, Lopez beheld the cacique in the rear. At sight of the Spaniard, Cotabanama bent his gigantic bow, and was on the point of darting one of his three-pronged arrows, but Lopez rushed upon him and wounded him with his sword. The other Indians, struck with panic, had already fled. Cotabanama, dismayed at the keenness of the sword, cried out that he was Juan de Esquibel, claiming

respect as having exchanged names with the Spanish commander. Lopez seized him with one hand by the hair, and with the other aimed a thrust at his body; but the cacique struck down the sword with his hand, and, grappling with his antagonist, threw him with his back upon the rocks. As they were both men of great power, the struggle was long and violent. The sword was beneath them, but Cotabanama, seizing the Spaniard by the throat with his mighty hand, attempted to strangle him. The sound of the contest brought the other Spaniards to the spot. They found their companion writhing and gasping, and almost dead, in the gripe of the gigantic Indian. They seized the cacique, bound him, and carried him captive to a deserted Indian village in the vicinity. They found the way to his secret cave, but his wife and children had received notice of his capture by the fugitive Indians, and had taken refuge in another part of the island. In the cavern was found the chain with which a number of Indian captives had been bound, who had risen upon and slain three Spaniards who had them in charge, and had made their escape to this island. There

were also the swords of the same Spaniards, which they had brought off as trophies to their cacique. The chain was now employed to manacle Cotabanama.

The Spaniards prepared to execute the chieftain on the spot, in the centre of the deserted village. For this purpose a pyre was built of logs of wood laid crossways, in form of a gridiron, on which he was to be slowly broiled to death. On further consultation, however, they were induced to forego the pleasure of this horrible sacrifice. Perhaps they thought the cacique too important a personage to be executed thus obscurely. Granting him, therefore, a transient reprieve, they conveyed him to the caravel, and sent him, bound with heavy chains, to San Domingo. Ovando saw him in his power, and incapable of doing further harm, but he had not the magnanimity to forgive a fallen enemy, whose only crime was the defence of his native soil and lawful territory. He ordered him to be publicly hanged like a common culprit*. In this ignominious manner was the cacique Cotabanama executed,

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind., l. ii., c. 18.

the last of the five sovereign princes of Hayti. His death was followed by the complete subjugation of his people, and sealed the last struggle of the natives against their oppressors. The island was almost unpeopled of its original inhabitants, and meek and mournful submission and mute despair settled upon the scanty remnant that survived.

Such was the ruthless system which had been pursued, during the absence of the admiral, by the commander Ovando, this man of boasted prudence and moderation, who was sent to reform the abuses of the island, and, above all, to redress the wrongs of the natives. The system of Columbus may have borne hard upon the Indians, born and brought up in untasked freedom, but it was never cruel nor sanguinary. He inflicted no wanton massacres nor vindictive punishments; his desire was to cherish and civilize the Indians, and to render them useful subjects, not to oppress, and persecute, and destroy them. When he beheld the desolation that had swept them from the land during his suspension from authority, he could not restrain the strong expression of his feelings.

In a letter written to the king after his return to Spain, he thus expresses himself on the subject. "The Indians of Hispaniola were and are the riches of the island; for it is they who cultivate and make the bread and the provisions for the Christians, who dig the gold from the mines, and perform all the offices and labours both of men and beasts. I am informed that, since I left this island, six parts out of seven of the natives are dead, all through ill treatment and inhumanity; some by the sword, others by blows and cruel usage, others through hunger. The greater part have perished in the mountains and glens, whither they had fled, from not being able to support the labour imposed upon them." For his own part, he added, although he had sent many Indians to Spain to be sold, it was always with a view to their being instructed in the Christian faith, and in civilized arts and usages, and afterwards sent back to their island to assist in civilizing their countrymen *.

The brief view that has been given of the policy of Ovando in certain points on which Columbus

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind., l. ii., c. 36

was censured, may enable the reader to judge more correctly of the conduct of the latter. It is not to be measured by the standard of right and wrong established in the present more enlightened age. We must consider him in connexion with the era in which he lived. By comparing his measures with those of men of his own times, praised for their virtues and abilities, placed in precisely his own situation, and placed there expressly to correct his faults, we shall be the better enabled to judge how virtuously and wisely, under the peculiar circumstances of the case, he may be considered to have governed.

END OF VOLUME THE THIRD.